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Gregory A. Cranmer

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**Exploring the Anticipatory Socialization Stage of Division I Student-Athletes: The
Content, Characteristics, and Functions of Memorable Messages**

Gregory A. Cranmer

**Dissertation submitted
to the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences
at West Virginia University**

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Studies

**Scott A. Myers, Ph.D., Chair
Alan K. Goodboy, Ph.D.
Matthew M. Martin, Ph.D.
Keith Weber, Ph.D.
Dana Brooks, Ph.D.**

Department of Communication Studies

**Morgantown, West Virginia
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**Keywords: memorable messages, organizational assimilation, sport communication,
sport socialization, student-athletes**

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ABSTRACT

Exploring the Anticipatory Socialization Stage of Division I Student-Athletes: The Content, Characteristics, and Functions of Memorable Messages

Gregory A. Cranmer

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the socialization of Division I student-athletes prior to their arrival on campus via the framework of organizational socialization and assimilation stage models, and by specifically examining the content, characteristics, and functions of the memorable messages they receive during their anticipatory stage of socialization. Using first cycle, initial coding and second cycle, pattern coding, results indicated that the content of student-athletes' memorable messages include 10 topics that can be categorized as either addressing the characteristics or experiences of collegiate student-athletes. The results of frequency counts regarding the characteristics of memorable messages indicate that student-athletes mostly received messages in private, informal, and face-to-face conversations with their coaches and fathers that occurred during their high school. Using same coding procedures that were employed to examine memorable message content, the intentions behind memorable messages and the functions these messages serve during the anticipatory socialization stage and the assimilation stage were examined. Results indicated that sources communicated memorable messages with 13 intentions, which were categorized into five categories: to develop desired characteristics of collegiate student-athletes, to respond to student-athletes' circumstance, to share knowledge or feelings with student-athletes, to prepare student-athletes for their tasks and roles, and to influence student-athletes' participation in sport. During participants' anticipatory socialization stage, memorable messages served nine functions which were collapsed into three categories: guided student-athletes' decisions to participation in collegiate athletics, shaped student-athlete's expectations for future organizational experiences, and influence student-athletes' attitudes towards their team, sport, and self. During participants' assimilation stage, memorable messages served 11 functions which were grouped into three categories: forms student-athletes' relationships with collegiate coaches and teammates, shapes student-athletes' competence and productivity as team members, and influences student-athletes' attitudes towards their team, sport, and self. Collectively, the results of this dissertation demonstrate that memorable messages are important within student-athletes' organizational assimilation process, as these messages set their attitudes and expectations for their future organizational experiences with their teams and assist in the formation relationships, performance of tasks and roles, and development of attitudes after they join those teams.

Acknowledgements

Well, I never thought this day would actually arrive. West Virginia University has been my home for the past eight years, and now I am on the verge of starting a new and exciting chapter of my career. This journey has not been easy and, while I sacrificed a lot to finish it, the only way I made it this far was because of the people in my life. There are so many people who made this accomplishment possible.

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proud of everything you have accomplished this year, and know you will continue to do amazing things as you enter the Ph.D. program.

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Now to continue a tradition started by my colleague Dr. Sara Labelle. I have some advice for future students here at WVU. This is a special place. WVU should mean more to you than a few letters on your CV or diploma. Your time here is more than a stepping stone toward some future notoriety. If you are only here so you can eventually call yourself Doctor, you are in the wrong place. Know that when you go here, you become part of something bigger because we are all connected. You will benefit from the reputation of this program, but do not forget that this reputation was built on the work of the faculty and students who preceded you. Your aim should be to contribute to this reputation over the course of your career—you should serve it more than it serves you. Know that you can learn a lot of things from older doctoral students because they have already been in your situation. During your time here, you will be provided with as many opportunities as challenges, so take advantage. Read everything you can get your hands on. Say “yes” to every opportunity to do research that presents itself to you. Go to every business meeting or panel you can at ECA and NCA—conferences are not vacations and

your absence is noticed. Be competitive and use each other as motivation to produce scholarship—that is what we are here to do. However, never forget that you are in this process together. Finally, work your you know what off. This experience will be what you make of it.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Currently, there are nearly 500,000 collegiate student-athletes participating in athletics that are sanctioned and overseen by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015). Many of these student-athletes experienced a difficult and tumultuous period of adjustment during their transition from high school to collegiate athletics (Wylleman & Lavellee, 2004), especially on the Division I level (Gerdy, 1997). This transition is marked by the experience of not only the traditional problems that all college students face (e.g., time management, career decisions, or academic demands), but also by problems that are unique for student-athletes such as experiencing intense pressure to refine their athletic skills, competing in environments that produce high levels of uncertainty regarding role stability, and adapting to a team's continually changing social dynamics (Carodine, Almond, & Gratto, 2001; Howard, 2013; Wylleman & Lavellee). Although many student-athletes successfully navigate these problems, when they are unable to do so, it fosters negative experiences (e.g., decreased satisfaction and commitment) and may lead to a decision to leave their respective teams and educational institutions (Carodine et al.; Gerdy).

One reason why student-athletes are unable to adjust to collegiate athletics is because they are not successfully socialized into their tasks, roles, teams, and schools (Carodine et al., 2001; Marx, Huffmon, & Doyle, 2008; Wylleman & Lavellee, 2004). Socialization is defined generally as the complex social process that produces individuals who are prepared (i.e., socialized) to participate in society and more specifically as the social process that produces individuals who are prepared to perform a variety of social roles within specific sub-groups that exist in society (Clausen, 1968; Goslin, 1969), one

of which is the collegiate athletic team (McPherson, 1981).

Not surprisingly, the socialization of Division I student-athletes into their collegiate athletic teams begins well before they arrive on campus (Sage, 1980; Weiss & Knoppers, 1982). This period of the socialization process, which occurs prior to student-athletes officially joining their athletic teams, provides student-athletes with an initial understanding of their tasks (e.g., attending practices, treatments, strength conditioning sessions, and study halls) and roles (e.g., positions they play, their starting status), sets their expectations for their future sporting career, and influences their subsequent socialization into their teams (Marx et al., 2008). Yet, despite the importance of this period of socialization for student-athletes' adjustment, sport socialization research has yet to provide an adequate framework for understanding the specific mechanisms of student-athletes' socialization into their respective collegiate athletic teams (Marx et al.; Wylleman & Lavellee, 2004). One such mechanism of socialization may be student-athletes' communication with a variety of socialization agents in general, and in particular the specific messages that student-athletes retain and recall throughout this adjustment (Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991; Kassing et al., 2004; Nixon, 1990).

The transition into Division I athletics and the messages that student-athletes receive during their socialization experiences prior to joining a collegiate athletics team may best be examined through an organizational socialization framework (Marx et al., 2008), with a specific focus on the memorable messages that student-athletes receive from a variety of socialization agents (Colon, 2011; Dunleavy & Yang, 2015; Kassing & Pappas, 2007; Starcher, 2015). A memorable message is an enduring statement that has a profound influence on the life of its recipient, including the process through which individuals are socialized into groups (Knapp, Stohl, & Reardon, 1981). Within the

organizational context, memorable messages provide workers with information regarding the norms, values, rules, expectations, and social networks of their workplaces, which inform employees' cognitive processes, attitudes, and behaviors throughout the socialization process (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Steimel, 2013; Stohl, 1986). Thus, the purpose of this dissertation is to explore the socialization of Division I student-athletes prior to their arrival on campus via the framework of organizational socialization and assimilation stage models, by specifically examining the content, characteristics, and functions of the memorable messages they receive during their anticipatory stage of socialization.

To reach this end, this chapter is organized into four sections. In the first section, the stage models proposed by interdisciplinary organizational socialization and organizational communication assimilation researchers are reviewed. In the second section, three perspectives of sport socialization are outlined. In the third section, the study of memorable messages within the organizational communication context is examined. In the fourth section, the rationale for this dissertation is provided, including the statement of the hypotheses and the research questions guiding the study. Additionally, a list of the key words used in this chapter is available in Appendix A.

Stage Models of Organizational Socialization

Historically, the organizational socialization process has been studied using stage models that frame employees' socialization into their new organizations as a series of transitions they undertake as they move through several stages of adjustment. The study of organizational socialization through stage models has been especially prominent within two bodies of literature: the interdisciplinary perspective on organizational socialization and the organizational communication perspective on organizational

assimilation.

From an interdisciplinary perspective, organizational socialization is conceptualized as “the process through which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors required to adapt to a new work role” (Wanberg, 2012a, p. 17). The successful adaption to a new work role specifically requires employees to acquire an understanding of their organization’s goals and values, their organization’s history (e.g., traditions, myths, customs, stories, and rituals) and politics (i.e., power structures), its people and language (e.g., slang, jargon, and technical language), and the organization’s standards for proficiency (Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994). This interdisciplinary perspective on organizational socialization is comprised of research from scholars across academic disciplines, but primarily consists of researchers from the fields of business management (Feldman, 1981, 1984; Heimann & Pittenger, 1996; Kraimer, 1997) and organizational psychology (Dose, 1997; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Posner & Powell, 1985). The research conducted from this perspective informed the development of a second perspective, which is the organizational communication perspective on organizational assimilation.

Within the organizational communication perspective in the Communication Studies discipline, employee adjustment is examined via the concept of organizational assimilation, which is conceptualized as the process through which employees join, participate in, and eventually leave an organization (Jablin, 1987; 2001; Kramer & Miller, 2014), with employee assimilation deemed successful if workers are able to integrate into their organization’s culture (Hess, 1993; Jablin, 1982). As workers move through the organizational assimilation process, they undergo both socialization, which consists of an organization’s attempts to influence its employees to change in ways that

fit the needs or desires of the organization, and individualization, which consists of an employee's attempts to influence an organization to change in ways that fit his or her needs or desires (Bullis, 1993; Kramer & Miller, 1999). Jablin's use of terminology (i.e., assimilation, socialization, and individualization) has been criticized as convoluted when considered in conjunction with the terms used by interdisciplinary socialization scholars (Bullis, 1999; Turner, 1999; Waldeck & Myers, 2007), but Kramer and Miller (1999) argued that this specific terminology is meant to replace, not be used in conjunction, with the terminology of the interdisciplinary perspective. However, the differences between the interdisciplinary and communicative perspectives goes beyond terminology, as the interdisciplinary perspective emphasizes an organization's goals and attempts to socialize employees, whereas the Communication Studies perspective recognizes the duality of the socialization and individualization (Bullis, 1993; Kramer & Miller, 1999; Miller & Kramer, 1999) and emphasizes the role of human interaction and the messages communicated through those interactions as a means of employee adjustment (Bullis, 1999; Clair, 1996, 1999; Smith & Turner, 1999).

Despite the differences between these two perspectives, both perspectives are mutually informative and address the processes of employees' adjustment throughout their careers. In this section, the history, focus, and stages of both the interdisciplinary stage model of organizational socialization and the organizational communication stage model of assimilation will be reviewed.

Interdisciplinary Stage Models of Organizational Socialization

Although the interdisciplinary stage models of organizational socialization were most prominent during the 1970s (e.g., Buchanan, 1974; Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975; Van Maanen, 1976) and 1980s (e.g., Feldman, 1981; Nelson, 1987), they still

continue to shape scholarly understanding of employee adjustment (Wanberg, 2012b). To date, several stage models of socialization have been proposed by a host of researchers across academic disciplines including journalism (Breed, 1955), management (Feldman, 1976a, 1976b; Schein, 1978; Van Maanen), administrative sciences (Porter et al.; Nelson), psychology (Wanous, 1980), and political science (Buchanan). Although these stage models differ somewhat in their focus, their use of terminology, and the number of stages that comprise each model, they share several commonalities that suggest that organizational socialization is a multi-stage process that contains three primary stages. The three stages are (a) pre-entry, which refers to the period of time that precedes employees' entrance into their organizations; (b) encounter, which encompasses employees' entrance into their organizations and their confrontation with organizational reality; and (c) adjustment, which denotes the period that follows employees' entrance into their organizations and their subsequent adjustment to organizational reality (See Figure 1).

Pre-entry stage. During the pre-entry stage, individuals considered to be organizational outsiders prepare to occupy organizational positions by forming expectations for future organizational tasks and relationships (Nelson, 1987; Van Maanen, 1976). According to researchers, this stage begins early in childhood and continues throughout adolescence as organizational outsiders continually acquire information from multiple sources (e.g., their families and peers, their formal educational systems, and their previous work experiences) prior to their entry into a workplace (Porter et al., 1975; Schein, 1968). Simultaneously, organizations help organizational outsiders acquire information about potential future tasks and relationships through interactions with organizational insiders and the provision of organizational media (Van

Figure 1. Summary of Interdisciplinary Organizational Socialization Stage Models

<i>Sources</i>	Breed (1955) <i>Newsroom Socialization Model</i>	(Schein, 1971b) <i>Organizational Socialization of College Professors Model</i>	Buchanan (1974) <i>Organizational Commitment/Manager Socialization Model</i>
<i>Pre-entry Stage</i> – Period of time prior to an employee joining an organization.		<i>Stage 1: “Pre-entry”</i> – employee is preparing, getting an education, and receiving anticipatory socialization for their future job.	
<i>Encounter Stage</i> – Period of time immediately surrounding an employee joining an organization.	<i>Stage 1: “Cub Stage”</i> (first few months or years) – employee learns techniques and policies.	<i>Stage 2: “Basic Training”</i> – employee receives training, is indoctrinated, and gains tentative acceptance. <i>Stage 3: “First Regular Assignment”</i> – employee is tested by workgroup, and if accepted receives further training to maximize ability and prepares for promotions.	<i>Stage 1: “Basic Training and Initiation”</i> (first year) – employee learns basic aspects of the job, develops relationships, comes to grips with organizational reality, and receives feedback.
<i>Adjustment Stage</i> – Period of time when an employee is no longer a newcomer and begins adjusting.	<i>Stage 2: “Wiring-in Stage”</i> – employee assimilates to organizational values and solidifies relationships with coworkers. <i>Stage 3: “Star Stage”</i> – employee defines self as full member and views organizational goals as their own.	<i>Stage 4: “Second Assignment”</i> – employee is tested by workgroup, and if accepted receives further training to maximize ability and prepares for promotions, again. <i>Stage 5: “Granting of Tenure”</i> – employee passes through another inclusionary boundary and is fully accepted.	<i>Stage 2: “Performance”</i> (second to fourth years) – employee becomes more task focused, receives reinforcement from supervisors, romanticizes organizational goals and values, develops a sense of importance, and manages their self-identity. <i>Stage 3: “Organizational Dependability”</i> (fifth year and beyond) – employee accepts organizational norms and commitment stabilizes.

Figure 1. (cont.)

<i>Sources</i>	Porter, Lawler, & Hackman (1975) <i>Socialization Model</i>	Van Maanen (1976) <i>Three Stage Socialization Model</i>	Feldman (1976a, 1976b) <i>Three Stage Socialization Models</i>
<i>Pre-entry Stage</i> – Period of time prior to an employee joining an organization.	<i>Stage 1: “Pre-arrival”</i> - employee forms attitudes, values, and expectations for work through interactions and experiences.	<i>Stage 1: “Anticipatory Socialization”</i> – employee prepares to occupy organization position through forming expectations through interactions and experiences.	<i>Stage 1: “Anticipatory Socialization/ Getting in”</i> – employee begins to form expectations for basic aspects of the job and relationships.
<i>Encounter Stage</i> – Period of time immediately surrounding an employee joining an organization.	<i>Stage 2: “Encounter”</i> – employee confronts organizational reality, attempts to assert their values and desires, receive confirmation/disconfirmation of expectations, and get rewards/punishment for behavior.	<i>Stage 2: “Encounter”</i> – employee experiences disparities between expectations and organizational reality, begin to interact with coworkers, and learn organizational culture.	<i>Stage 2: “Accommodation/ Breaking in”</i> – employee confronts organizational reality, is initiated to the task and workgroup, defines his/her role, and develop congruence of evaluation with supervisors.
<i>Adjustment Stage</i> – Period of time when an employee is no longer a newcomer and begins adjusting.	<i>Stage 3: “Change and Acquisition”</i> - employee alters their attitudes, values, and behaviors in the direction desired by the organization, and forms new relationships, values, and self-images.	<i>Stage 3: “Metamorphosis”</i> – employee implements solutions for problems he/she has discovered during the first encounter with the organization via adapting to the organization or individualizing their role.	<i>Stage 3: “Role Management/ Settling in”</i> – employee manages conflicts regarding work-life balance and workgroup demands.

Figure 1. (cont.)

<i>Sources</i>	Schein (1978) <i>Three Stage Socialization Model</i>	Wanous (1980) <i>Integrative Socialization Model</i>	Louis (1980) <i>Newcomer Surprise and Sense Making Model</i>
<i>Pre-entry Stage</i> – Period of time prior to an employee joining an organization.			
<i>Encounter Stage</i> – Period of time immediately surrounding an employee joining an organization.	<i>Stage 1: “Entry”</i> - organization and employee create false expectations and employee searches for accurate information.	<i>Stage 1: “Confronting and Accepting Organizational Reality”</i> – employee get confirmation/disconfirmation of expectations, is rewarded/punished for behavior, and experiences conflict.	<i>Stage 1: “Detection Stage”</i> – employee is confronted by change and surprise as a result of facing organizational reality. <i>Stage 2: “Diagnosis”</i> – employee uses predispositions, experiences, and input from others to make sense of the disparities. <i>Stage 3: “Interpretation”</i> – employee assigns meaning to event that have gone through sense making and then acts upon them.
<i>Adjustment Stage</i> – Period of time when an employee is no longer a newcomer and adjusts to the organizational reality.	<i>Stage 2: “Socialization”</i> – employee accepts organizational reality, forms a congruence between his/her needs and organizational climate, receives evaluations, and copes with ambiguity/structure. <i>Stage 3: “Mutual Acceptance”</i> - employee is accepted and committed.	<i>Stage 2: “Achieving Role Clarity”</i> – employee defines roles, learns tasks, copes with ambiguity/structure, and develops congruence in organizational and individual appraisals of performance. <i>Stage 3: “Locating Oneself in the Organizational Context”</i> – employee learns desirable behaviors, is commitment, resolves work-life conflicts, and forms new workplace relationships. <i>Stage 4: “Detecting signposts of Successful Socialization”</i> – employee is satisfied, committed, involved, motivated, and feels accepted.	

Figure 1. (cont.)

<i>Sources</i>	Feldman (1981) <i>Multiple Socialization Model</i>	Nelson (1987) <i>Stress and Socialization Model</i>
<i>Pre-entry Stage</i> – Period of time prior to an employee joining an organization.	<i>Stage 1: “Anticipatory Socialization”</i> – employee develops expectations for job and organizational realities and determines potential congruence between his/her needs and abilities with organizational offerings.	<i>Stage 1: “Anticipatory Socialization”</i> - employee forms attitudes, values, and expectations for work through interactions and experiences, which help set up future coping strategies.
<i>Encounter Stage</i> – Period of time immediately surrounding an employee joining an organization.	<i>Stage 2: “Encounter”</i> - employee manages work-life and workgroup conflicts, defines his/her role, and is initiated to his/her task and workgroup.	<i>Stage 2: “Encounter”</i> (first six to nine months) – employee faces organizational reality (i.e., task and relational demands) and recognizes the stress that accompanies this reality.
<i>Adjustment Stage</i> – Period of time when an employee is no longer a newcomer and adjusts to the organizational reality.	<i>Stage 3: “Change and Acquisition”</i> – employee resolves role demands, develops a task mastery, and adjusts to workgroup culture, values, and norms.	<i>Stage 3: “Change and Acquisition”</i> – employee continually copes with organizational and life stressors

Maanen). Collectively, this information shapes organizational outsiders' expectations about their potential future organizational experiences (Porter et al.).

The expectations that organizational outsiders form during the pre-entry stage can vary in two ways. The first way is the degree of realism (Feldman, 1976a, 1976b), which is the extent to which organizational outsiders have a full and accurate picture of the components (i.e., potential tasks, roles, and relationships) associated with a specific occupation. Because the multifaceted nature of organizational experiences (i.e., the distinction among tasks, roles, and relationships) means that organizational outsiders can have realistic expectations for one component of their future careers, but unrealistic expectations for the other components, Nelson (1987) differentiated between realistic expectations about an organization and realistic expectations about a job. Realistic expectations about an organization refers to an outsider's complete and accurate understanding of the guiding structures of an organization (e.g., organizational goals, values, philosophy, or climate), whereas realistic expectations about a job consists of an outsider's complete and accurate understanding of the tasks and responsibilities associated with a specific job.

The second way is the degree of congruence, which refers to the extent to which outsiders believe their skill sets, needs, or values are compatible with their expectations for future organizational experiences (Chatman, 1989; Feldman, 1976a, 1976b, 1981; Kraimer, 1997). Congruence can emerge in the form of person-organization congruence, which refers to outsiders' expectations that their own and a future organization's resources, needs, and skills will be mutually satisfying (Feldman), or in the form of work value congruence, which denotes the degree to which outsiders expect that their norms and values will be compatible with those of a future organization (Chatman).

These variations in organizational outsiders' expectations during the pre-entry stage are important for outsiders' subsequent socialization into the workplace. To this point, the realism of expectations eases individuals' learning of organizational roles, culture, and norms; produces greater levels of workplace satisfaction and commitment; and aids in how individuals cope with the initial stress they experience upon organizational encounter (Nelson, 1987; Premack & Wanous, 1985). Similarly, expectations of congruence foster outsiders' initial levels of organizational commitment, satisfaction, and involvement (Kraimer, 1997). Thus, the pre-entry stage is an important stage of socialization because organizational outsiders' initial expectations serve as a foundation that later is utilized to evaluate and make sense of their early organizational experiences as they move into the encounter stage (Porter et al., 1975; Schein, 1968; Van Maanen, 1976).

Encounter stage. During the encounter stage, organizational outsiders make the transition to organizational newcomers as they begin work and confront the organizational reality that awaits them. The encounter stage officially begins when employees begin working at their respective organization and lasts anywhere from the first few months of employment until the end of the first year of work (Buchanan, 1974; Feldman, 1976a, 1976b; Nelson, 1987). During this stage, organizational newcomers experience extensive amounts of uncertainty and stress as they engage in the initial processes of adjustment (Nelson; Nelson & Quick, 1991; Nelson, Quick, & Joplin, 1991).

These processes center on newcomers' attempts to define and learn about the basic aspects of their tasks and roles within an organization (Breed, 1955; Buchanan, 1974; Wanous, 1980) as well as their attempts to develop relationships with coworkers (Nelson, 1987; Van Maanen, 1976). During the encounter stage, newcomers experience a

variety of demands that are placed on them by supervisors and coworkers (Nelson) such as task demands (e.g., work overload, time pressures, promotions), role demands (e.g., role conflict, role ambiguity, work-life balance), and interpersonal demands (e.g., pressure to socially integrate into the workgroup, workplace politics). To resolve these demands, newcomers must (a) master their tasks by developing competence in performing their new duties, (b) define their roles by accepting and understanding their specific responsibilities within their workgroups, and (c) integrate into their workgroups by developing close relationships with coworkers (Feldman, 1976a, 1976b, 1981).

However, most newcomers will experience uncertainty regarding the adequacy of their initial attempts to meet these demands. Thus, preliminary task and social feedback from supervisors and coworkers (Buchanan; Wanous), which often is provided in the form of reinforcement and confirmation (i.e., a positive reaction to their behaviors), non-reinforcement (i.e., an absence of a reaction to their behaviors), or negative reinforcement (i.e., a punishment; Porter et al., 1975), enables newcomers to assess their early workplace performance and serves as a guide for future work-related behavior (Feldman).

During this stage, newcomers' attempts to learn their tasks and roles and form relationships with coworkers are impeded by the disparity that exists between their initial expectations for organizational experiences and their observed organizational realities as well as conflicts with workgroup members (Van Maanen, 1976; Wanous, 1980). Often, expectations that were formed during the pre-entry stage are inflated and cannot be met by the newcomer's actual work situation. The difference between these inflated expectations and the current organizational reality produces great amounts of uncertainty and stress, which is referred to as reality shock (Van Maanen). To overcome reality shock, newcomers must adjust their expectations to match their work situations, which is

a difficult and lengthy process known as an unfreezing period (Nelson, 1987; Schein, 1968). Successful socialization and the navigation of the unfreezing period is also made increasingly difficult by workgroup conflict, which is created by the shifting roles or changes in social dynamics within a workgroup that result from the addition of the newcomer (Feldman, 1976a, 1976b).

At the end of the encounter stage, newcomers understand their basic tasks and roles, have formed new relationships with coworkers, but also experience reality shock and workgroup conflicts. These initial processes of adjustment and the difficulties that impede this adjustment, which define the encounter stage, are important for newcomers' subsequent socialization into the adjustment stage.

Adjustment stage. During the adjustment stage, newcomers make the transition to fully established employees. The adjustment stage occurs a few months to a year after the encounter stage and continues indefinitely until employees leave their organizations (Wanberg, 2012a). Thus, employees remain in the adjustment stage of organizational socialization for most of their careers. During this stage, the initial processes of adjustment, which employees began in the encounter stage, are continually refined as employees are further integrated into their organization's culture.

Successful socialization in the adjustment stage requires employees to continue to improve their task and role competencies, as well as continue to develop their relationships with coworkers. However, these activities differ in the adjustment stage because established employees have a better understanding of both their work roles and their organization's expectations of them (Wanous, 1980). This increased understanding allows employees to master their tasks, resolve workgroup conflicts, and strengthen their interpersonal relationships with supervisors and coworkers (Feldman, 1981; Porter et al.,

1975; Wanous). Employees' mastery of their task performances, acceptance of their roles, and development of their workplace relationships solidify their identity as a meaningful organizational member by providing them with a sense of importance and responsibility in the workplace (Breed, 1955; Buchanan, 1974). This change in employee identity is important because the adjustment stage is partially defined by employees viewing themselves as fully established members of the organization (Buchanan; Schein, 1978; Wanous).

During this stage, employees must also resolve their experiences of reality shock and successfully negotiate the unfreezing period (Van Maanen, 1976). The successful negotiation of the unfreezing period is accomplished through employees' acceptance of organizational values and the development of employee-organization congruence (Buchanan, 1974; Porter et al., 1975; Schein, 1978). The acceptance of organizational culture is achieved by an employee's adoption of appropriate pivotal behaviors (i.e., the specific behaviors essential for the job), relevant behaviors (i.e., the specific behaviors that are desired, but not required), and peripheral behaviors (i.e., the specific behaviors that are permissible, but not required; Porter et al.). Congruence between employees and organizations is fostered by numerous means, including employees' attempts to self-socialize (Ashford & Black, 1996; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000), their development of successful coping strategies (Nelson, 1987), the individualization of their roles to meet their work-related needs and demands (Schein, 1968, 1988; Porter et al.; Van Maanen), or an organization's attempts to socialize employees using either individualized or institutional socialization tactics (Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

When employees are able to successfully navigate the adjustment stage and foster

congruence between themselves and their organizations, they experience a host of positive outcomes of organizational socialization (Bauer & Erdogan, 2012; Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998; Griffin, Colella, & Goparaju, 2000), which can encompass the learning of work-related skills (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002, 2005), developing positive organizational attitudes (Ashforth & Saks, 1996), improving workplace performances (Ashford & Black 1996; Bauer & Green, 1994), or reducing employee stress (Saks, 1995, 1996). The most commonly examined outcomes of organizational socialization include acceptance by insiders (Bauer, Bodner, Tucker, Erdogan, & Truxillo, 2007; Bravo, Peiro, Rodriguez, & Whitely 2003; Gruman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006), role clarity (Feldman, 1976b; Van Maanen, 1976; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000), performance self-efficacy (Feldman; Gruman et al.; Saks, 1995), employee satisfaction (Jones, 1986; Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller), and organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Buchanan, 1974; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Collectively, this body of research indicates that successfully socialized employees integrate into their workgroups, have a clear understanding of their tasks and roles, are confident in their abilities to perform their assigned tasks, and are more satisfied with and committed to their organization (Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan; Bauer et al., 1998).

Summary

The interdisciplinary perspective on organizational socialization has produced a variety of stage models, which indicate that individuals move through three stages during the socialization process. This process begins before individuals enter the workforce as they develop expectations for future work experiences; continues as they enter their workplaces and attempt to integrate into their workgroups, learn their tasks, and resolve

disparities between their initial expectations and their organizational reality; and concludes as they form relationships with coworkers, master their tasks, and develop congruence between themselves and their organization. As employees successfully move through these stages of organizational socialization, they experience a variety of positive organizational outcomes. Overall, the interdisciplinary stage models of organizational socialization offer insight into and inform other perspectives of employee adjustment, such as the organizational communication perspective and the subsequent development of Jablin's stage model of assimilation.

Organizational Communication Stage Model of Assimilation

Several models of organizational socialization proposed by interdisciplinary scholars (e.g., Feldman, 1976a, 1976b; Porter et al., 1975; Van Maanen, 1976) influenced the development of organizational communication models of organizational assimilation (Hess, 1993; Jablin, 1982; Kramer, 2011b). In 1982, the first (and most utilized) model was introduced by Fredric Jablin. This model was refined throughout the next two decades (1985b, 1987, 2001), as its value and contribution to organizational communication were debated by several scholars (e.g., Clair, 1999; Bullis, 1999; Kramer & Miller, 1999; Turner, 1999). These scholars critiqued Jablin's model as restricting itself to a linear understanding of assimilation (Clair, 1996, 1999; Hess, 1993; Turner, 1999; Waldeck & Myers, 2007) and for perpetuating the container metaphor (Bullis, 1993; Clair; Smith & Turner, 1995; Turner), which posits that organizational communication occurs solely within the physical setting (i.e., container) of a workplace (Putnam, Phillips, & Chapman, 1999). Other scholars have noted that the model ignores the importance of employees' individual differences (Allen, 1996; Bullis; Hess), discards the value of non-traditional organizations and types of work (Clair), and overlooks the

language and discourse that maintains organizations, such as metaphors (Smith & Turner, 1995), colloquialisms (Clair), narratives (Mumby, 1987), and memorable messages (Stohl, 1986).

Although these criticisms illustrate potential gaps within the extant organizational assimilation research, these shortcomings are not limitations of the stage model of organizational assimilation, but rather the agenda of the researchers who have studied assimilation through stage models (Kramer & Miller, 1999; Miller & Kramer, 1999). Jablin's stage model of organizational assimilation, therefore, is still widely recognized as a useful perspective for examining employee assimilation (Kramer, 2010; Kramer & Miller, 2014; Waldeck & Myers, 2007). For instance, to date, various workplace populations have been examined from this perspective, including organizational newcomers (Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1995; Stephens & Dailey, 2012), transferees (Kramer, 1993, 1994, 1996; Kramer, Callister, & Turban, 1995), veteran employees (Hart & Miller, 2005; Kramer & Noland, 1999; Tourish, Paulsen, Hobman, & Bordia, 2004), former employees (Avery & Jablin, 1988), and even customers (Fonner & Timmerman, 2009). Likewise, Jablin's model has been extended to numerous professions such as fire-fighting (Myers, 2005; Scott & Myers, 2005), careers in STEM (i.e., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; Buzzanell, Berkelaar, Kisselburgh, 2011; Jahn, & Myers, 2014, 2015; Myers, Jahn, Gailliard, & Stoltzfus, 2011), blue collar jobs (Berkelaar, Buzzanell, Kisselburgh, Tan, & Shen, 2012; Lucas, 2011a, 2011b), and volunteer organizations (Kramer, 2011a, 2011b).

Although these aforementioned studies examine various processes or stages of assimilation, they can readily be integrated in Jablin's stage model of organizational assimilation. This model consists of three stages, which are (a) anticipatory socialization,

which refers to the period of time that precedes employees' entrance to their organizations; (b) assimilation, which encompasses employees' entrance into their organizations and their subsequent adjustment to organizational reality; and (c) exit, which denotes a period of time where employees disengage from and leave their organizations.

Anticipatory socialization stage. During the anticipatory socialization stage, individuals form expectations for their future careers and organizations at which they would like to work (Jablin, 1982, 1985b, 2001). The formation of these expectations begins early in childhood (Vangelisti, 1988) and continues throughout individuals' work careers (Kramer, 2010). During the anticipatory socialization stage, individuals engage in two distinct phases: vocational anticipatory socialization and organizational anticipatory socialization.

Vocational anticipatory socialization phase. Vocational anticipatory socialization (VAS) refers to the process through which individuals begin to form expectations about, and preferences for, a particular occupation (Jablin, 1985b, 1987, 2001). These expectations and preferences are formed through interacting with, and receiving information from, five unique agents of anticipatory socialization (Jablin, 1985a). Family is the first agent of VAS. Although this agent includes both immediate and extended family members, parents' communication with their children is particularly salient in this phase (Jablin; Kramer, 2010). Parents provide their children with functional information about potential careers (e.g., job requirements, working conditions, and the value of hard work) as well as emphasize the negative aspects of work (e.g., stress, tedious tasks, and unpleasant bosses; Levine & Hoffner, 2006). Parents communicate this information to their children explicitly through discussions of career and educational opportunities,

indirectly through general comments made about work or particular careers, or in an ambient manner through messages which are not spoken, but are observed (Buzzanell et al., 2011; Lucas, 2011a). The communication that occurs between parents and children during the VAS phase also fosters children's interest in particular occupations, as several studies have found that parents' communication of encouraging messages that establish expectations of children to pursue STEM careers (i.e., science, technology, engineering, or mathematics) or highlight the opportunities within these fields is associated with their children's increased interests in these occupations (Buzzanell et al.; Jahn & Myers, 2014; Myers et al., 2011).

Media is the second agent of VAS, which refers to a host of mediated forms of entertainment and information (e.g., radio, books, newspapers, and television) to which individuals are exposed (Jablin, 1987). Media provide individuals with information that emphasizes the positive aspects of work (e.g., salary or enjoyment of work), but rarely does it communicate functional information about the responsibilities or tasks of a particular job (Levine & Hoffner, 2006). This information is potentially influential for individuals' career aspirations, as two studies have found a small association between teenagers' desired careers and the careers of their favorite television characters, indicating that there is a relationship between viewing particular media and adolescents' vocational interests (Hoffner et al., 2006; Hoffner, Levine, & Toohey, 2008). Although no causal claims can be established from these two studies, media is a salient source of information about occupations for youth and adolescents because of its ubiquitous nature (Jablin, 2001; Vangelisti, 1988).

Educational institutions is the third agent of VAS, and includes primary and secondary schools that have an explicit mandate to socialize students for adulthood

(Jablin, 1985a). Educational institutions provide students with functional information about careers, emphasize the importance of education in obtaining and maintaining desirable occupations, and offer opportunities to develop interpersonal relationships within organizational contexts (Levine & Hoffner, 2006). However, this information may not be as readily understood or useful as it could be because students report receiving conflicting information from textbooks and instructors' lectures regarding the communicative requirements of specific careers (Jablin), and fail to understand how the information that they learn is applicable or useful in potential future workplaces (Jahn & Myers, 2015). Regardless of the information provided by educational institutions, children cite school as the context where they discover topics about which they enjoy learning, acquire knowledge about those topics, become interested in particular occupations, and develop attitudes toward the value of work (e.g., the importance of work ethic; Jablin, 1982, 1987, 2001; Jahn & Myers, 2014; Kramer, 2010). School is also a setting where children refine their understanding of what constitutes a "real job" as children come to associate acceptable occupations with key features such as high pay, educational prerequisites, a standard 40 hour work week, and potential enjoyment (Clair, 1996).

Peers and friends constitute the fourth agent of VAS, which encompasses individuals' social interactions with their peers both at school and in their community (Jablin, 1987; 2001). Peers and friends provide individuals with information about the positive and negative aspects of working, but offer little functional information regarding work and careers (Levine & Hoffner, 2006). Still, peers are important VAS agents who help shape individuals initial interests in particular occupations because they share their early working experiences and serve as sounding boards regarding potential careers of

interest (Clair, 1996; Jablin; Vangelisti, 1988). For example, in a study of assimilation at a manufacturing plant, Gibson and Papa (2000) found that individuals who have a large social network of friends and neighbors with either first- or second-hand experience at the plant also had greater initial interest in and more realistic expectations about working at the plant.

Part-time employment is the fifth agent of VAS, and refers to the first jobs that adolescents work, usually while in secondary school (Jablin, 1987, 2001). Part-time employment provides adolescents with functional information about work that they can utilize in future organizations, including information about the importance of interpersonal skills, the nature of organizational culture, and future career opportunities (Levine & Hoffner, 2006; Sias, Kramer, & Jenkins, 1997). This information and the experiential nature of part-time employment offers individuals' an initial understanding of the importance and nature of workplace relationships, provides first-hand experience inside an organizational setting, and facilitates professional development (Dailey, 2014; Jablin; Vangelisti, 1988). However, because these first jobs have few commonalities with most individuals' future career goals, many adolescents leave part-time employment with a limited repertoire of career-related skills (Jablin).

Organizational anticipatory socialization phase. Organizational anticipatory socialization (OAS) is conceptualized as the process through which individuals actively seek information about, and develop expectations for, the organization and position to which they have applied for employment (Jablin, 1987, 2001). This information is acquired from primarily two OAS agents: organizational literature (e.g., organizational brochures, newsletters, websites or job advertisements) and interactions with organizational members (e.g., current employees, interviewers, or supervisors; Jablin).

Of these OAS agents, screening and selection interviews are particularly salient for developing individuals' expectations about their future employment (Jablin, 1985b, 1987, 2001). Screening interviews occur early in the hiring process and provide applicants with preliminary information about a potential organization and aid in an organization's attempts to reduce the field of applicants for employment. Selection interviews, however, occur later during the hiring process and are used to make decisions regarding employment at an organization (i.e., whether an organization will offer an applicant a job and whether that offer will be accepted by the applicant; Miller & Buzzanell, 1996). Selection interviews are believed to be important sources of information during the organizational anticipatory socialization phase because of their onsite location, extended length, and presence of multiple organizational members (Miller & Buzzanell). Collectively, the interview process provides individuals with their best opportunity to seek information about an organization or position directly from organizational members, and helps them develop initial expectations for future workplaces (Jablin; Jablin & McComb, 1984).

At the conclusion of the anticipatory socialization stage, similar to the interdisciplinary pre-entry stage, Jablin (1985b, 1987, 2001) emphasized the importance of forming realistic expectations for future workplace experiences. Among organizational communication scholars in the Communication Studies discipline, the acquisition of these realistic expectations is referred to as realistic job previews, and are found to facilitate the successful adjustment of newcomers during the assimilation stage (Jablin, 1984).

Assimilation stage. The assimilation stage begins the moment employees enter an organization, and continues throughout their employment with that organization

(Jablin, 1985b, 1987, 2001). During this stage, employees move through two phases. The first phase is encounter, and pertains to the immediate entry of newcomer employees into their organizations. During this phase, newcomers confront the organizational reality and reduce any uncertainty they may be experiencing by seeking feedback and information that facilitates their learning of the necessary work-related skills and the development of relationships with coworkers that eventually allow them to become integrated into the organizational culture (Comer, 1991; Jablin & Miller, 1991; Miller, 1996). The second phase is metamorphosis, and marks employees' transition from newcomers to established and well-adjusted organizational members. Although it is difficult to identify the exact moment employees move from the encounter phase into the metamorphosis phase (Jablin), this movement is accomplished through the learning and enacting of attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with an organization's expectations. The metamorphosis phase continues throughout employees careers as they continue to adjust to organizational experiences such as transferring (Kramer, 1993, 1994; Kramer et al., 1995), being promoted (Kramer & Noland, 1999), dealing with organizational expansion (Sias & Wyers, 2001) or downsizing (Tourish et al., 2004), and interacting with organizational newcomers (Hart, Miller, & Johnson, 2003; Gallagher & Sias, 2009).

During these two phases, employees' adjustment to the workplace largely can be attributed to their abilities to form beneficial workplace relationships (Jablin, 1982, 1985b, 1987), which are conceptualized as employees' relationships with their coworkers (Sias, Krone, & Jablin, 2002). These workplace relationships are created and maintained via communication, and are characterized by three features: (a) choice (i.e., the degree to which a relationships is freely chosen or assigned), (b) intimacy (i.e., the closeness, candor, and depth of communication that exists between coworkers), and (c) status (i.e.,

the formal levels of hierarchy and authority that may or may not exist between coworkers). These features, which may vary, are present in three types of salient workplace relationships. Superior-subordinate relationships are those assigned relationships that vary in intimacy between organizational members of differing status, one of whom has direct authority over the other (Jablin, 1979). Peer relationships feature low degrees of choice, vary in intimacy, and are relationships established between two coworkers of equal status (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Mentor-protégé relationships, which can be either assigned or chosen, are highly intimate relationships between an experienced organizational member (i.e., mentor) and a less advanced or skilled organizational member (i.e., protégé) that aid in the personal and professional development of the protégé (Bokeno & Gantt, 2000; Kalbfleisch, 2002).

Superior-subordinate relationships are important for employee assimilation because supervisors frequently interact with employees, serve as role models, mediate the flow of information between top management and their subordinates (Jablin, 1982, 1987, 2001), and act as significant sources of information about organizational goals, practices, and procedures (Jablin, 1979). During the encounter phase of the assimilation stage, employees are highly dependent on their immediate supervisors for information and instruction about tasks (Morrison, 1993a, 1993b; Teboul, 1994). However, as employees transition into the metamorphosis phase, their dependence on supervisors for task information decreases, but supervisors are still valuable sources of information during times of organizational change or instability (Gallagher & Sias, 2009; Sias, 2005, 2009; Sias & Wyers, 2001). Furthermore, in the metamorphosis phase, the communication patterns between supervisors and subordinates become firmly established as either leader exchanges that are characterized by mutual trust, attention, and influence between

supervisors and employees, or supervisory exchanges that are characterized by supervisors' use of one-way communication and coercive means of gaining compliance from employees (Jablin). Superior-subordinate relationships that act as leader exchanges facilitate continued assimilation by providing employees with information, support, and feedback that aid in their socialization (Fairhurst, 1993; Kramer, 1995; Sias), and by granting them the upward influence and autonomy needed for the individualization process to occur (Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989; Waldron, 1991).

Peer relationships are the most readily available relationship in the workplace due to the frequency of interaction and the close proximity between peers (Jablin, 1987). These relationships provide employees with information about task and workplace norms (Kramer, 1993; Sias, 2005), offer support to solve workplace problems (Cahill & Sias, 1997; Fritz, 1997; Odden & Sias, 1997), and serve as organizational role models (Sias, 2009). During the encounter phase, newcomers observe or passively seek information from peers to gain an initial understanding of their organizational experience (Comer, 1991; Teboul, 1994). In particular, peer relationships provide newcomers with information regarding the informal political dynamics of a workplace (e.g., who wields informal power, the informal consequences of specific attitudes or behaviors) and the normative attitudes and behaviors that are neither prescribed by supervisors nor organizational policies that newcomers should adopt (Hart, 2012; Morrison, 1993b). During the metamorphosis phase, employees continue to develop their peer relationships with those coworkers with whom they share organizational tasks, discuss their life problems, socialize with outside of the workplace, and perceive as having similar demographic characteristics, organizational attitudes, and personality traits (Sias & Cahill, 1998; Sias, Smith, & Avdeyeva, 1999). As these relationships become more

intimate, they become characterized by high levels of trust and solidarity (Myers & Johnson, 2004), as well as greater use of communication openness, functional communication skills (Myers, Knox, Pawlowski, & Ropog, 1999), and affinity-seeking strategies (Gordon & Hartman, 2009). Employees' ability to form these intimate peer relationships influences their subsequent adjustment to their tasks and integration into the culture of their workgroups and organizations (Sias).

Mentor-protégé relationships provide protégés with a designated coworker (i.e., a mentor) from whom they can seek information and support while attempting to assimilate into their organization (Bokeno & Gantt, 2000; Jablin, 2001). The mentor-protégé relationship is differentiated from other workplace relationships that aid organizational assimilation in that this relationship is explicitly intended to groom employees for career advancement; it can be either a formal or an informal relationship, and it can exist either between supervisors and subordinates or among peers (Jablin; Sias, 2009). Mentor-protégé relationships provide protégés with feedback that enables their skill development, psychological benefits that helps them cope with uncertainty in the workplace, and access to individuals outside of the protégés' social networks who aid them in their career development (Bokeno & Gantt; Egan, 1996; Rymer, 2002). During the encounter phase, mentor-protégé relationships begin to form and mentors develop expectations for protégés' future performances and potential (Bullis & Bach, 1989; Kalbfleisch & Davies, 1993; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). During the metamorphosis phase, mentors coach and challenge protégés to meet these expectations, while also providing them with exposure, protection, and sponsorship (Kram, 1983). The nurturing environment that is provided under the tutelage of their mentors allows protégés to successfully navigate the assimilation stage (Kalbfleisch, 2002; Sias).

When employees engage in successful supervisor-subordinate relationships, peer relationships, and mentor-protégé relationships, they are more likely to assimilate into their organizations. Although these three types of workplace relationships are distinct and provide employees with specific benefits, collectively it can be suggested that these relationships offer employees resources (e.g., information, support, and feedback) that enable them to move through the assimilation stage until they need to transition into the exit stage.

Exit stage. During the exit stage, employees disengage from their workplace (Jablin, 1985b, 1987). Although the exit stage begins when employees either make the decision to voluntarily exit their organization (e.g., transfer, quit, retire) or are forced to involuntarily exit after their supervisors make the decision to terminate them, it continues well after until they leave their organizations. During this stage, employees communicatively negotiate their disengagement from their organization, as do their coworkers. This stage of assimilation can best be understood in three phases that consist of (a) preannouncement, (b) announcement and exit, and (c) post exit (Kramer, 2010; Kramer & Miller, 2014; Jablin, 2001).

The preannouncement phase, which references the cues and signals that precede the announcement of an employee's exit, begins when either managers recognize and warn employees about problematic behavior and contemplate potentially terminating these employees (Cox & Kramer, 1995), or when employees make the decision to leave the organization of their own volition (Kramer, 2010; Kramer & Miller, 2014). Of the organizational experiences that lead to employees' decisions to disengage from their workplace, low quality relationships with coworkers (Feeley & Barnett, 1997; Fritz, 1997; Scott et al., 1999), the presence of peer influenced exit tactics (i.e., employees'

attempts to motivate their peers to voluntarily exit their organization; Cox, 1999), and managers' attempts to induce turnover (Cox & Kramer) are noted as especially influential. After employees decide to leave their workplaces, the preannouncement phase continues as they communicatively manage their intent to leave before it becomes public knowledge (Jablin, 2001). During this time, employees selectively disclose their decision to those coworkers whom they believe will be supportive of their decision as well as with those coworkers with whom they have close relationships (Jablin; Kramer; Tan & Kramer, 2012).

The announcement and exit phase begins with the public announcement of the impending exit of an employee. The announcement can be made by either a manager who has fired an employee (Cox & Kramer, 1995) or directly by an employee who plans to leave the workplace (Tan & Kramer, 2012). The timing, framing, and delivery of an exit announcement are noted as extremely important for easing employees' transition out of a current organization and into a new organization, as informing coworkers of an exit during times of stability, framing the decision as well reasoned, and downplaying the effect of the departure can minimize peers' uncertainty and cultivate an organizational climate that is supportive of the exiting employee (Tan & Kramer). After employees initially disclose their intention to leave, the announcement and exit phase continues until they officially leave their workplaces. Although this period can vary in length of time (Jablin, 2001), it is marked by employees reflecting on their previous organizational experiences that were shared with their peers (Davis & Myers, 2012), decreasing their current organizational involvement (Cude & Jablin, 1992), or anticipating their future post-exit experiences (e.g., retirement or new jobs and relationships; Avery & Jablin, 1988; Cude & Jablin; Smith & Dougherty, 2012). Eventually, the announcement and exit

phase is concluded when employees officially exit their organizations, which may or may not be marked by their participation in an exit interview (Gordon, 2011).

Post exit is the third phase, which centers on the subsequent communication that follows employees' official exit from their organizations. This phase includes the adjustment of both exited employees and their former coworkers who remain employed at the organization (Jablin, 2001). During this phase, exited employees begin their transition into a new career or job (i.e., starting the process of assimilation all over in a new organization; Tan & Kramer, 2012) or retirement (Avery & Jablin). This transition is characterized by the decrease in communication between exited employees and their former coworkers due to their lack of shared experiences and exited employees attempts to cultivate new relationships outside of their former organizations (Avery & Jablin; Jablin; Kramer, 2010). Former coworkers of exited employees also may experience a process of adjustment, as the departure of a coworker can create new uncertainties for some employees regarding their organizational roles and responsibilities (Casey, Miller, & Johnson, 1997; Johnson, Bernhagen, Miller, & Allen, 1996; Tourish et al., 2004).

Summary

Jablin's organizational assimilation stage model provides a useful perspective for understanding the assimilation process that workers go through when entering, participating, and eventually leaving an organization. Within this process of assimilation, individuals prepare for future organizational experiences by interacting with various socialization agents who help to determine their interests in particular occupations and organizations. Once individuals become members of an organization, the relationships they form with coworkers facilitate both their socialization into, and individualization of, their workplace. Scholarly interest in employee adjustment within the workplace is

paralleled by interest in individual's socialization into roles and groups within other contexts including athletes' socialization within the context of sport, which is encompassed within sport socialization research.

Sport Socialization Research

Within sport studies, sport socialization is conceptualized as either the complex social processes by which sport prepares athletes to participate in society or the complex social processes that prepare athletes to participate in, and learn about, roles within sports teams (McPherson, 1981). The sport socialization process begins when individuals are first introduced to sport, continues throughout their participation in sport, and concludes when they withdraw from participation in sport (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Coakley, 1993). To date, sport studies researchers have examined the agents and features that surround and are embedded within sport socialization at both a macro and a micro level (Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991; McPherson; Nixon, 1990). At the macro level, these researchers examine the influence of social and cultural agents (e.g., sex, race, or nationality) on athletes' participation in sport and the way in which this participation preserves established social ideologies (e.g., capitalism, meritocracy, or protestant work ethic). At the micro level, sport socialization researchers examine the influence of individual agents (e.g., parents, coaches, and educational systems) on athletes' participation in sport and the social, psychological, cognitive, and physical outcomes that athletes acquire through their participation.

Sport socialization research has been a continual fixture throughout the history of sport studies (Donnelly, 2000). The first sport socialization studies, which examined the participants and the outcomes of their involvement in sport, appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s within the field of sport sociology (e.g., Kenyon, 1966, 1970; Kenyon &

McPherson, 1973; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1973; Wohl & Pudelskiewicz, 1972). Since these early studies, additional sport-related fields (i.e., sport psychology, sport management) have contributed to this body of literature by incorporating the psychological processes and outcomes into the existing literature, and by recognizing the organizational features that accompany individuals' participation in sport (Brustad, 1992; Chalip, 2006; Donnelly, 2000). Despite the growth of sport socialization research, interest in the topic waned during the 1980s and 1990s, which inspired a series of critiques aimed to progress and revitalize this area of research (Allison, 1982; Coakley, 1993; Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991; McCormack & Chalip, 1988; McPherson, 1981; Nixon, 1990). While these efforts advanced the study of sport socialization by providing novel theoretical insights and suggestions for future research, empirical investigations on this topic have been sporadic since 2000 (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2014; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004).

Unlike both the organizational socialization and assimilation perspectives, the study of sport socialization does not feature stage models that explain athletes' adjustment. Instead, sport socialization scholars recognize two distinct perspectives of sport socialization: (a) socialization into sport, which refers to the period of time when athletes begin to develop interest in and participate in sport; and (b) socialization via sport, which refers to the attitudes, behaviors, and values that athletes acquire through playing sport. In this section, the conceptualization, focus, and research findings of each perspective will be reviewed.

Socialization into Sport Perspective

The socialization into sport perspective is the most extensively studied perspective of sport socialization research (Coakley, 1993). This perspective focuses on

how individuals are socialized into sport from early childhood (i.e., four to nine years old) throughout adolescence (Allison & Meyer, 1988; McPherson, 1981) by recognizing the processes through which individuals initially become involved in sport and learn their sport roles (Sage, 1987; Sage & Eitzen, 2013; Weiss & Glenn, 1992).¹ Within the socialization into sport perspective, the socialization agents who inspire sport participation, the roles of athletes' characteristics within their own socialization, and communication within sport are recognized as influential for determining athletes involvement in sport.

Socialization agents. Various socialization agents foster athletes' interest in sport through transferring their values and expectations for sport participation to potential athletes (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin, 2008; Sage, 1980); these potential athletes then internalize these messages and behaviors and decide whether to participate in sport. Although four agents are theorized as essential to this process (i.e., families, peers and coaches, educational institutions, and sport media), only two of these agents have garnered empirical attention (McPherson, 1981; Sage; Sage & Eitzen, 2013).

The first socialization agent is athletes' families, which are the most important source for inspiring athletes' initial and continued participation in sport (Sage, 1987; Weiss & Glenn, 1992). Families foster participation in sport by serving as role models for children who attempt to replicate their parents' and siblings' attitudes and behaviors regarding sport (Davidson, Downs, & Birch, 2006; Dixon, Warner, & Bruening, 2008; Sage, 1980). Role modeling is especially notable among grade school (Fredericks & Eccles, 2005) and middle school athletes (Anderssen & Wold, 1992; Fredericks, Simpkins, & Eccles, 2005), as they are more likely to participate in sport if their parents either participated in athletics or are involved in athletics in capacities such as coaching

and attending games. When families encourage their children to partake in sport and emphasize sport as an important source of desired life lessons or virtues (e.g., hard work, fair play, and perseverance), their children are more likely to become athletes (Fredricks & Eccles; Sage; Woolger & Power, 1993; Wuerth et al., 2004). Consequently, children often emulate their families' attitudes, behaviors, and values regarding sport, as well as comply with families' explicit efforts to encourage participation in sport.

The second agent is an athlete's peers and coaches. Researchers have found that once athletes become involved in sport, they give more credence to their relationships with individuals outside of their immediate families, particularly their peers and coaches (Brown, Frankel, & Fennell, 1989; Stevenson, 1990b; Weiss & Knoppers, 1982). For instance, peer encouragement and support to partake in sport are associated with participation in club (Coakley & White, 1992), middle school (Anderssen & Wold, 1992), high school (Brown et al., 1989), collegiate (Giuliano, Popp, & Knight, 2000; Greendorfer, 1978), and adult recreational athletics (Spreitzer & Snyder, 1976). In a study of American high school athletes, Patrick et al. (1999) found that athletes' relationships with their peers were cited as the primary reason for their continued participation in sport. Similar to peers, coaches also have been framed as a fundamental reason behind why athletes are involved in sport as they age (McCormack & Chalip, 1988; Sage, 1987; Spreitzer & Snyder, 1976). As athletes enter early adolescence (i.e., when athletes are 13-18 years old), coaches in middle and high schools are important sources of athletes' initial interest in participating in new sports that they have not previously attempted (McPherson, 1981). Once athletes begin participating in these sports, their motivation and self-efficacy for continued participation is determined largely by their interactions with their coaches (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008; Sage & Eitzen,

2013).

Athlete characteristics. In addition to families, peers, and coaches, sport socialization scholars recognize that athletes play a role in their own socialization into sport in three ways. First, as athletes age they develop opinions about sport (e.g., the value of participation, their own abilities to be successful within their respective sports). Athletes continually develop and reevaluate these opinions throughout their athletic careers (Coakley & White, 1992; Donnelly & Young, 1988), but use them when considering their continued involvement in sport or athletics (Stevenson, 1990a, 1990b).

Second, athletes' demographic characteristics influence socialization agents' attempts to socialize them into sport (Coakley, 1993). For instance, athletes are more likely to be socialized into particular sports that are readily available within their geographic location (McPherson, 1981; Schwartz & Corkery, 2011) and that are affordable for individuals within their socio-economic status (Coakley & White, 1992; Greendorfer, 1978). However, athletes' sex and race are noted as especially salient factors in their socialization. For instance, despite the four decades that have passed since the passing of Title IX Legislation, women still do not partake in collegiate sport at the same rates as men or receive equal funding as men's sports (Mullins, 2015). The slowed growth of female participation in sport is attributed to the patterns of gender socialization for females (e.g., their toys and play groups), which direct them to activities other than sport (Giuliano et al., 2000; Kunes, Hasbrook, & Lewthwaite, 1992) and societal pressures which dictate that only a limited number of sports are appropriate for females to play (Brustad, 1996; Coakley & White; Sage, 1980).

Similarly, athlete race can be very influential in the socialization process as many athletes play sports that are historically and culturally important to their respective racial

groups (Sage & Eitzon, 2013). The prominence of race in sport socialization is especially noted for Black athletes who are more readily socialized into the sports of basketball and football for a variety of reasons (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Bruening, 2005; Goldsmith, 2003). For instance, the socio-economic realities of some segments of the Black athlete population renders the opportunity for future payment a prime motivation to participate in the sports of basketball and football (Smith, 2009). For these athletes, participation in these sports becomes an opportunity to significantly change the social and economic standing of their families rather than a mere activity provided that the athlete can be successful enough to play professionally (Smith). Additionally, the role of these sports within Black culture, both historically and in modern America, is a profound source of collective identity, which can stifle participation in alternative sporting opportunities that may dissociate Black athletes from their racial group (Ogden & Hilt, 2003). An alternative explanation for this pattern of sport participation is that socialization agents and athletes together reinforce and promote participation in particular sports (Halone, 2008; Ogden & Rose, 2005) and roles within those sports (i.e., a process known as stacking; Smith, 2000) based on pre-conceived understandings of Black athleticism (Harrison & Valdez, 2004; Hoberman, 1997; Sailes, 2000).

Sport socialization and communication. A recognized but largely missing aspect of socialization into sport is the examination of how socialization is constantly negotiated through the communication that occurs between socialization agents and athletes (Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991; Kassing et al., 2004; Nixon, 1990). Sport communication scholars, who are best positioned to address this aspect of socialization, have primarily operated outside of the sport socialization framework with few exceptions (Starcher, 2015; Turman, 2007). These studies have found that parents, particularly

fathers, are important socialization agents that shape children's participation in and understanding of athletics. This importance is because parents serve as supporters and instructors within their children's socialization into sport, as they not only encourage the playing of sports, but also assist in the learning of sport-related skills and rules (Turman). Additionally, fathers shape children's understanding of the how to play sport by emphasizing the importance of putting forth effort, developing athletic skill, being of good character, having fun, and recognizing other sporting figures when partaking in athletics (Starcher).

An additional host of sport communication researchers has conducted studies that are tangentially related to athletes' socialization into sport. These researchers have highlighted that today's athletes are socialized within a changing sporting culture that increasingly emphasizes specialization and winning at all costs, even for youth athletes (Kassing & Barber, 2007; Meân, 2013; Meân & Kassing, 2008b). Within this landscape, coaches are primary sources of athletes' motivation to partake in sport (Turman, 2003b), feelings of regret (Turman, 2005, 2007b), expressions of dissent (Kassing & Anderson, 2014), perceptions of cohesion with peers (Turman, 2003b, 2008), and their identities as athletes (Meân & Kassing, 2008a). In particular, these researchers have found that coaches' use of effective instructional behaviors (Turman, 2006, 2008; Webster, 2009), their cultivation of prosocial leadership styles (Turman, 2001, 2003a; Turman & Schrod, 2004), and their avoidance of aggressive communication (Kassing & Infante, 1999; Martin, Rocca, Cayanus, & Weber, 2009; Mazer, Barnes, Grevious, & Boger, 2013) foster a variety of positive outcomes for athletes (e.g., affective learning, motivation, satisfaction, and cohesion).

Socialization via Sport Perspective

The socialization via sport perspective has received less empirical attention than the previous two perspectives, but frames sport as an important and influential context for the social development of athletes (Coakley, 1993; Kassing et al., 2004; Sage & Eitzen, 2013). Extant research conducted within the socialization via sport perspective has focused on the outcomes that athletes experience as a result of their participation in sport. These outcomes include athletes' acquisition of attitudes, behaviors, and values toward a variety of issues, but the three most commonly examined outcomes are academic achievement, deviant behavior, and physical and psychological health (Sage, 1987; Strachan, Cote, & Deakin, 2011; Weiss & Glenn, 1992). Although historically sport is colloquially championed as a source of profound life lessons, moral development, and beneficial social adjustment, these benefits are not intrinsic to sport, but instead, are a result of the quality of athletes' sporting experiences (Meân, 2013) and the manner in which sport is managed and organized (Smoll, Cummings, & Smith, 2011).

To date, research has produced mixed results regarding the association between participation in athletics and academic achievement. The value of participation in high school sport is demonstrated by athletes' fewer absences in school (Videon, 2002), increased grade point average (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Soltz, 1986; Videon), higher SAT scores (Landers, Feltz, Obermeier, & Brouse, 1978), greater participation in non-sport-related extracurricular activities (Melnick, Vanfossen, & Sabo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1994), and college acceptance rates in comparison to their peers who are not athletes (Eccles & Barber, 1999). However, one study failed to find such links between high school participation with academic performance or college admittance (Schumaker, Small, & Wood, 1986). Meanwhile, other researchers have disputed the prosocial effects of sport on academic achievement, and suggested that high school athletes are a self-selected

population who tend to already be high academic achievers prior to their participation in sport (Spreitzer; Videon).

Traditionally, sport is touted as a means of keeping children out of trouble, and thus some scholars frame participation in sport as a means of reducing deviant behavior in athletes (Coakley, 1993; Sage & Eitzen, 2013; Strachan et al., 2011). However, research findings regarding the influence of participation in sport on athletes' deviant behaviors (e.g., criminal behavior, alcohol consumption, or violence toward others) has produced inconsistent findings. The benefit of sport participation is evidenced by lower rates of criminal behavior among college (Beamon & Bell, 2006), high school (Landers & Landers, 1978), and youth athletes (Strachan et al.) compared to their non-athlete peers. Similarly, youth athletes are found to be less likely than their non-athlete peers to consume alcohol (Hellandsjo Bu, Watten, Foxcroft, Ingebrigtsen, & Relling, 2002) and experience unplanned pregnancies (Strachan et al.) during their early teenage years. However, other researchers have found that participation in high school sports is either unrelated to drinking behavior altogether (Spreitzer, 1994) or is associated with increased use of alcohol among high school athletes, particularly among White males (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eitle, Turner, & Eitle, 2003). In a national sample of male high school athletes, Kreager (2007) found that participants in football and wrestling were more violent toward peers in comparison to non-athletes and athletes of alternative sports such as baseball, tennis, and basketball.

Given the physical and psychological benefits of exercise and physical activity, sport scholars conclude that sport should be good for participants' physical and psychological health (Coakley, 1993; Sage & Eitzen, 2013). To date, research findings have largely supported this notion. For instance, in a sample of European athletes, Skille

and Solbakken (2014) found that participation in sport during adolescence leads to continued physical activity throughout an athlete's life, and is deemed as an important way to prevent several detrimental health conditions (e.g., heart disease, diabetes, or obesity). Participation in sport is also associated with increases in self-esteem and self-concept among high school (Melnick et al., 1988; Schumaker et al., 1986), urban (Fisher, Juszczak, & Friedman, 1996), female (Miller & Levy, 1996), and international collegiate athletes (Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn, 2010). However, recent trends such as the specialization of youth athletes and increased pressures to win have been associated with youth athletes' experiences of mental fatigue and bodily injuries (Hyman, 2009).

Summary

In general, sport socialization research provides a holistic framework for examining athletes' participation in and withdraw from sport, as well as the societal benefits that athletes acquire through participation. This research is comprised of three distinct perspectives which (a) emphasize the importance that various agents of socialization play in athletes' decisions to become involved in sport (e.g., parents, peers, coaches), (b) examine a host of conditions that influence athletes' decisions to desist their participation (e.g., negative emotional experiences, injuries), and (c) demonstrate that participation in athletics has the potential to foster a variety of positive outcomes for athletes if sport is organized and managed properly. These differing sport socialization perspectives are accomplished through the communication that occurs between athletes and the individuals around them.

Memorable Messages

Memorable messages are conceptualized as those messages that recipients remember for a long period of time and have exerted considerable influence on some

aspect of their lives (Knapp et al., 1981; Stohl, 1986). These features define and differentiate memorable messages from other messages that individuals receive in two ways. First, a recipient's ability to recall a memorable message for an extended period of time after its original transmission distinguishes a memorable message from most other messages, in that most other messages are quickly forgotten only hours after being received (Stafford, Burggarf, & Sharkey, 1987). Second, the influence of memorable messages on a recipient's life can be profound, because these messages guide recipients' future cognitive processes and behaviors (Knapp et al.) and help them to make sense of new situations or relational partners (Holladay, 2002).

In 1981, Knapp and colleagues first identified the construct of memorable messages. Since their seminal study was conducted, the study of memorable messages has gained considerable attention. To date, Communication Studies researchers have examined memorable messages across a variety of contexts, such as sport (Colon, 2011; Dunleavy & Yang, 2015; Kassing & Pappas, 2007; Starcher, 2015), higher education (Kranstuber, Carr, & Hosek, 2012; Wang, 2012), health care (Cooke-Jackson, Orbe, Johnson, & Kauffman, 2014; Miczo, Danhour, Lester, & Bryant, 2013; Willer, 2014), the family (Heisler & Ellis, 2008; Holladay, 2002), romantic relationships (Kellas, 2010; Weigel & Weiser, 2014), and the organization (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Medved, Brogan, McClanahan, Morris, & Shepherd, 2006; Stohl, 1986). This body of research has also framed memorable messages as tools for transmitting morals from parents to children (Waldron, Kloeber, Goman, Piemonte, & Danaher, 2014) or as benchmarks that are used in intrapersonal communication by individuals during their self-assessment of the appropriateness of their behavior (Ellis & Smith, 2004; Smith & Ellis, 2001; Smith, Ellis, & Yoo, 2001).

Within the Communication Studies discipline, organizational communication scholars have focused on the characteristics of memorable messages as well as the role that memorable messages play in the organizational assimilation process (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Knapp et al., 1981; Stohl, 1986). In this section, the structure and form, the content, the surrounding circumstances, the relationships between the sender and receiver, and the function of memorable messages within the organizational assimilation process will be reviewed.

Structure and Form of Memorable Messages

The structure and the form of a memorable message centers on the construction of a memorable message (Knapp et al., 1981; Stohl, 1986). For the most part, memorable messages regarding organizational socialization are brief simple statements that can easily be recalled by employees (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Steimel, 2013; Stohl). Although some memorable messages can be communicated nonverbally or can be obtained from a lack of communication about particular types of work (Lucas, 2011a), for the most part, these messages tend to be communicated verbally (Barge & Schlueter; Stohl). Memorable messages can also follow a rule-based structure, which means that they must meet four conditions (Knapp et al.). These conditions include providing a context in which a rule is applicable, establishing a receiver's obligation to follow a rule, suggesting a behavior to enact in accordance with a rule, and identifying expected consequences for enacting the stated behavior in the message (Knapp et al.). Although not all memorable messages follow this rule-based structure (i.e., meet all four of the aforementioned conditions), scholars have found that most memorable messages function conceptually as rules and guide the behaviors of employees regardless of their structure (Barge & Schlueter; Stohl).

Content of Memorable Messages

The nature of the content of memorable messages refers to the specific information that is communicated to a receiver within the memorable message (Knapp et al., 1981). Preliminary research conducted on memorable messages has found that these messages primarily contain role-related knowledge and prescribe specific role behaviors that are necessary to facilitate employee adjustment within the workplace (e.g., Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Stohl, 1986). The behaviors which are prescribed within memorable messages are applicable in a variety of situations (i.e., transcontextual; Stohl).

Memorable messages are also consistent with other messages, albeit not memorable, which are communicated to employees via official organizational sources, such as memos, organizational manuals, or supervisors (Dallimore, 2003; Stohl). In this manner, the content of memorable messages reproduce organizational structures and encourage employees to engage in the process of socialization rather than the process of individualization (Barge & Schlueter). However, the content of memorable messages varies based on the position, goals, and attitudes of the employees who receive them, as individuals are more likely to remember and use messages that they perceive to be related to their current work experiences or can advance their careers in a desirable manner (Stohl). For instance, middle managers attempting to ascend the organizational hierarchy recall memorable messages related to organizational structure and career advancement (Stohl).

Given the importance of employees' characteristics for determining which messages become memorable, there are a variety of topics that can be embedded within the content of memorable messages. Both Stohl (1986) and Barge and Schlueter (2004) found that employees receive memorable messages about several topics, including the

behaviors required to perform one's role, to provide adequate customer service, or to maintain the norms of professionalism in the workplace; supervisory expectations regarding job performance and the evaluation process of this performance; and an organization's politics, structure, or preferred style of communication. Additionally, memorable messages also include greetings that welcome employees to the organization or make them feel valued within the workplace. Similarly, employees' potential to make significant contributions to the workplace, to provide input, or to experience personal growth were found to be topics of memorable messages within these two studies. Subsequent researchers have identified additional messages that employees receive, including messages about maintaining work-life balance (Medved et al., 2006), enjoying the work experience (Medved et al.; Steimel, 2013), adopting the organizational culture (Dallimore, 2003), and reporting failures and mistakes to supervisors (Noland & Carmack, 2014). Collectively, these studies demonstrate the variety of memorable messages within the workplace.

Circumstances Surrounding Memorable Messages

The circumstances surrounding the utterance of the message focuses on the contexts in which a memorable message is communicated to a receiver (Knapp et al., 1981). Within the organizational setting, memorable messages are received early in an employee's career (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Dallimore, 2003; Stohl, 1986). Stohl found that these messages are received after the orientation process, once employees officially begin work. However, subsequent research has demonstrated that individuals can acquire memorable messages prior to entering their organization that shape their understanding and orientation toward either work in general or work at a specific organization (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Lucas, 2011a; Medved, 2006). For instance, in a study of osteopathic

medical students, Harter and Krone (2001) found that instructors at osteopathic medical schools and interactions with patients provide medical students with memorable messages during their training that shapes their identification with their future professions. Similarly, Noland and Carmack (2014) determined that nursing students utilize memorable messages that they receive during training and clinical rotations (i.e., a period of time dedicated to learning the skills needed to be a nurse that occurs prior to their entry into a permanent organization) to shape their schema for reporting the errors or mistakes that they make on the job.

In addition to the timing of a message, the circumstance surrounding the transmission and reception of a memorable message include the setting, motive, and subsequent communication of a message. Messages that become memorable for employees are mostly communicated face-to-face between the sender and receiver and in private informal settings, rather than through other channels (e.g., e-mail, phone, or memo) or other settings (e.g., company meetings, regular business interactions; Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Stohl, 1986). Moreover, these messages are communicated by senders who are believed to possess benevolent motives or intentions to aid the receiver (Barge & Schlueter; Stohl). Once employees have received a memorable message, they are likely to share it with other coworkers within their organization when the message is applicable (Stohl). Overall, the individualized nature of a private conversation and a receiver's perceptions of a sender's motives as well intentioned increases the salience of the message and the likelihood that an employee will remember and share that message with other individuals (Knapp et al., 1981).

Relationships between Senders and Receivers of Memorable Messages

The relationship between a sender and receiver denotes the power and social

dynamics that exist between the individuals involved in the exchange of a memorable message (Knapp et al., 1981). In a study of 42 employees of an investment company, Stohl (1986) found that memorable messages are primarily communicated by those individuals who are embedded either within an employee's social networks or with whom employees have frequent contact, underscoring the importance of the relational nature of these messages. Of individuals with whom employees have frequent contact, memorable messages regarding the importance or meaning of work usually are communicated to adolescents by their parents prior to their entry into the workplace (Lucas, 2011a; Medved et al., 2006), and then again by their trainers and managers once they begin work at their respective organization (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Noland & Carmack, 2014; Steimel, 2013). Within the workplace, memorable messages are communicated by coworkers who have worked at the organization longer or are of a higher organizational status than the employee receiving the message (Stohl). For instance, in a study of volunteer workers from nonprofit organizations, Steimel found that volunteers receive memorable messages primarily from their bosses, managers, or volunteer coordinators, followed by paid employees and more experienced volunteer peers, and least often from others outside of the organization.

Function of Memorable Messages

The function that these messages serve within the workplace is the final characteristic of memorable messages (Barge & Schlueter, 2004). In general, memorable messages aid in employees' adjustment to their organizations by facilitating socialization and individualization throughout the assimilation process (Barge & Schlueter; Stohl, 1986). Stohl broadly framed these messages as serving the function of informing employees about the organizational norms, cultures, values, rules, and expectations for

employee performance, behavior, and attitudes. In a study of organizational newcomers, Barge and Schlueter identified specific functions that memorable messages serve within the assimilation process, such as fostering employee growth and new skills, encouraging employees to persevere through difficult work situations, clarifying how goals and priorities associated with an employee's role fit within the organizational structure, decreasing employees' stress by making work enjoyable, reinforcing company expectations, promoting customer service, and encouraging employees to reflect on their assumptions about their work situations. Other research has demonstrated that memorable messages serve additional functions within the workplace, such as establishing employee identification and satisfaction (Harter & Krone, 2001; Steimel, 2013), setting communication patterns (Noland & Carmack, 2014), and preserving organizational culture (Dallimore, 2003).

Summary

Memorable messages are brief discursive statements that emphasize the adoption of particular behaviors across various organizational situations. These messages are often exchanged between coworkers who have frequent interaction with each other, as veteran employees communicate memorable messages to employees with less experience and who are lower in the organizational hierarchy. These messages can cover a variety of topics, but generally serve the function of helping employees assimilate into their organization.

Rationale

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the organizational assimilation of Division I student-athletes prior to their arrival on campus by examining their retrospective accounts of the memorable messages they received during their anticipatory

socialization stage, and the functions which these messages served during their anticipatory socialization stage and subsequently their assimilation stage. The fulfillment of this purpose will provide initial insight into how Division I student-athletes are prepared for and adjust to their tasks, roles, teammates, and organizations prior to beginning college (Kassing et al., 2004). In particular, understanding the communicative exchanges that student-athletes not only remember but also deem influential from their anticipatory socialization stage will serve as a foundation for understanding their adjustment and transition into collegiate athletics (Marx et al., 2008; Wylleman & Lavelle, 2004). However, before this purpose can be accomplished, the suitability of Division I student-athletes as a sample, the applicability of an organizational socialization and assimilation perspectives within the context of sport, the value of examining the anticipatory socialization stage of student-athletes' organizational assimilation, and the specific contribution of using a memorable message approach to examine student-athletes' anticipatory socialization stage must be established.

Division I student-athletes were deemed an appropriate sample for this dissertation because the transition into Division I athletics is noted as one of the most difficult transitions that student-athletes can face during their athletic careers (Carodine et al., 2001; Gerdy, 1997; Wylleman & Lavellee, 2004). Adjustment to Division I sport is difficult because of the numerous challenges that collegiate athletics presents for student-athletes. For instance, in all of amateur athletics, the largest disparity in talent exists between high school and Division I athletics. Currently, there are nearly eight million high school athletes in the United States (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2014), yet only the most gifted 2% of these athletes will play on the Division I level (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015). This drastic increase in

competition can be overwhelming or frustrating for young student-athletes (Gerdy). Additionally, student-athletes must adapt socially to athlete-coach relationships that are more similar to superior-subordinate relationships and are likely different from the relationships they had with high school coaches (Billings, Butterworth, & Turman, 2012, 2015; Gerdy). Division I student-athletes also experience additional obstacles that many college students face such as moving away from one's family, forming new social networks, and dealing with the pressures of increased academic demands. Collectively, these obstacles make Division I student-athletes' adjustment to their teams difficult, and highlight the importance of understanding the organizational assimilation of this population in an effort to ensure that student-athletes are prepared to enter and are successfully socialized into their collegiate teams.

Although multiple frameworks could potentially be utilized to make sense of student-athletes' socialization into their collegiate teams, organizational socialization and assimilation perspectives may be one effective manner through which student-athletes' socialization can be examined and understood. The selection of these perspectives is not meant to ignore the potential contributions of other perspectives, but rather is proposed as just one way to view student-athlete adjustment. For instance, the group socialization perspective, which also utilizes its own stage model (Anderson, Riddle, & Martin, 1999), could be a beneficial framework for future studies. However, the group socialization perspective was not utilized within this dissertation because this perspective specifically focuses on small group communication (e.g., Anderson & Martin, 1995, 1999; Anderson et al., 1999), and small groups typically consist of three to 15 members (Myers & Anderson, 2008). Given the majority of Division I athletic teams (e.g., 14 of the 17 athletics teams at WVU) have more than 15 members, the organizational perspectives

were deemed more adequate for the current purpose.

Moreover, the use of organization perspectives is fitting for four reasons. First, athletic teams can be conceptualized as organizations. By definition, an organization is a group of individuals who use communication to work together in a coordinated manner to accomplish a common goal and to maintain the boundaries between members and non-members (Jones, Watson, Gardner, & Gallois, 2004). Similarly, athletic teams are comprised of a collection of individuals (e.g., players, coaches, trainers) who coordinate their efforts to accomplish their team's goals (i.e., primarily to win games, matches, or contests), and who are separated from non-team members by boundaries that are both physical (e.g., access to locker rooms or a team's bench during competition or uniforms) and psychological (e.g., possession of knowledge about the inner workings of a team or member identification; Quartermann, 2003). Given these commonalities, several sport studies scholars have recognized the applicability of using organizational perspectives to examine athletic teams and athletes' sporting experiences (Chelladurai, 2009; Kassing & Anderson, 2014; Kassing et al., 2004), including Division I student-athletes' socialization into their teams (Marx et al., 2008).

Second, the communicative process of organizing is a foundational aspect of sport (Kassing et al., 2004; Pedersen, 2013). As such, organizational frameworks and constructs are readily applied to and operate in a similar manner within the context of sport and athletics (Case, 1998; Kassing & Anderson, 2014; Turman, 2001). These organizational frameworks become even more appropriate as the level of athletics increases and winning becomes a more salient goal for a particular team or coach. This appropriateness is because highly competitive athletic teams, such as those at the Division I level, operate more closely to organizations with the task of winning being the

central focus of coaches, who resemble supervisors as they interact with and evaluate student-athletes primarily based on their ability to contribute to a team's performance (Billings et al., 2012, 2015). By doing so, the focus on making friends, having fun, and creating a good team climate, which are associated more readily with group perspectives of sport and athletic teams, become secondary goals (Billings et al.). Of the levels of amateur athletics, Division I athletics emphasizes a win-at-all-cost mindset more than any other division because of the high-profile nature of these programs and the millions of dollars that can be at stake for universities (Gerdy, 1997). These factors result in Division I student-athletes being treated more similar to employees than students (Gerdy), and highlights the applicability of organizational frameworks within Division I collegiate athletics.

Third, the application of organizational socialization and assimilation perspectives for examining the socialization of student-athletes into specific athletic teams provides insight that is of great conceptual importance for sport socialization research. To date, despite the conceptualization of socialization explicitly including adjustment to specific sub-groups within society (e.g., an athletic team; Clausen, 1968; Goslin, 1969), socialization into sport scholars have overlooked student-athletes' socialization into specific athletic teams. Instead, they have focused on general patterns of sport participation and the effects of this participation (Coakley, 1993; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008; McPherson, 1981). Therefore, this dissertation has heuristic value in that it begins to address this dearth of research within sport socialization literature (Wylleman & Lavellee, 2004; Marx et al., 2008).

Fourth, the incorporation of the organizational socialization and assimilation perspectives into the sport context will answer scholarly calls for future directions of

research from both sport studies and organizational communication scholars alike. Specifically, the use of organizational socialization and assimilation frameworks have been called for to explore student-athletes' adjustment to specific athletic teams (Marx et al., 2008). Similarly, organizational scholars have called for the extension of organizational assimilation research to less traditional types of organizations (Kramer, 2011a, 2011b; Scott, 2013), given organizational communication researchers' historical preoccupation with what Clair (1996, 1999) classified as "real jobs." If sport teams can be considered to be a nontraditional organization (i.e., an organization that does not meet Clair's definition of a real job), the extension of the organizational assimilation perspective to this context would be consistent with the efforts of scholars like Clair, Kramer, and Scott. Thus, this dissertation also has heuristic value as it answers previous calls for scholarly research from multiple fields.

Within the organizational socialization and assimilation perspectives, the specific focus on the anticipatory socialization stage of student-athletes is noteworthy for two reasons. First, this focus has theoretical importance because it reduces the reliance on the container metaphor by recognizing that interactions that occur outside of organizational settings and prior to student-athletes joining their athletic teams can be influential within their organizational assimilation process (Bullis, 1993; Clair, 1996; Smith & Turner, 1995; Turner, 1999). Second, this focus has practical importance for Division I student-athletes' adjustment because they begin to be socialized into collegiate athletics by family, peers, coaches, and the media well before they arrive on campus (Sage, 1980; Sage & Eitzen, 2013; Weiss & Knoppers, 1982). During this time period, student-athletes form expectations, attitudes, and motivations regarding future tasks and relationships they may experience in college (Jablin, 1987, 2001; Vangelisti, 1988). These expectations,

attitudes, and motivations subsequently have a lasting effect throughout their organizational assimilation process (Jablin, 1984), as these orientations determine the ease and rate in which individuals can be successfully socialized (Schein, 1968; Reichers, 1987).

Gerdy (1997) noted that the adjustment of Division I student-athletes is impeded because prior to arriving at college, many of them receive advice and information that improperly prepares them for the realities they will face there. One way to examine the specific advice or information that student-athletes receive during their anticipatory socialization, and retain and use throughout their assimilation process is a memorable message approach. This approach is a useful framework for examining student-athletes' organizational assimilation due to the influence that particular messages can have throughout athletes' careers. For instance, anecdotal evidence exists that athletes are motivated to partake and succeed in sport based on reflecting on motivational or challenging messages that they received throughout their careers (Oakley, 2014). Empirical evidence has supported this notion as athletes from a variety of levels of sport, including Division I athletics, are able to recall memorable messages regarding a variety of topics (Colon, 2011; Kassing & Pappas, 2007; Starcher, 2015). However, how these messages are utilized and what function they serve student-athletes has remained overlooked.

Within the organizational assimilation perspective, memorable messages are just one mechanism which aids in individuals' adjustment to their organization (Waldeck & Myers, 2007). Although these messages are more readily communicated during the early periods of the assimilation stage (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Steimel, 2013; Stohl, 1986), these messages are also communicated during the anticipatory socialization stage (Harter

& Krone, 2001; Lucas, 2011a; Medved et al., 2006; Noland & Carmack, 2014). Despite being less common, examining the memorable messages that individuals receive prior to their assimilation stage is important for two reasons. First, understanding the content, characteristics, and functions of the memorable messages that student-athletes' receive prior to their organizational entry has practical value as these messages set their expectations, attitudes, and motivations for future organizational experiences (Medved et al.; Steimel). Therefore, this initial understanding can yield significant insight into how student-athletes are socialized into their athletic teams. Second, the exploration of the content, characteristics, and functions of the memorable messages that student-athletes' receive has heuristic value because it recognizes the role of discourse within the process of socialization into sport and student-athletes' adjustment to specific athletic teams, both of which have yet to be explored by sport studies scholars (Colon, 2011; Kassing et al., 2004).

To fully understand the importance of memorable messages that student-athletes' received during their anticipatory socialization stage, the content, characteristics, and functions that these messages serve within their organizational assimilation process must be examined.

Content

Gaining an initial understanding of the content of the memorable messages that Division I student-athletes receive during their anticipatory socialization stage provides insight regarding the reproduction and transformation of social knowledge that may influence adjustment to athletic teams (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Medved et al., 2006). Specifically, the focus on memorable message content reveals which topics of social knowledge are reproduced and transformed through the communication of memorable

messages between sources and receivers (Stohl, 1986). Subsequently, this emphasis also identifies which particular topics resonate with Division I student-athletes and may be influential for shaping their organizational assimilation into their athletic teams.

To date, the content of the memorable messages that are communicated to Division I student-athletes during their socialization into sport has received very little empirical attention by sport researchers (Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991; Kassing et al., 2004; Nixon, 1990). Based on socialization into sport literature, it could be expected that the messages Division I student-athletes receive during their anticipatory socialization stage tout the value of participating in sport in general or a particular sport specifically, and, as such, encourage their participation in sport or athletics. These messages can also address particular aspects of sport or athleticism. For instance, previous studies have found that former athletes recall receiving memorable messages regarding a variety of topics of content including motivational or instructional messages, the importance of playing sport in a particular way, and the value of sport for teaching life lessons (Colon, 2011; Kassing & Pappas, 2007; Starcher, 2015). Additionally, based on the organizational socialization and assimilation literature, it can also be speculated that the content of student-athletes memorable messages may include information regarding potential tasks and roles (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Steimel, 2013; Stohl, 1986), or social interactions within their future collegiate athletic teams (Barge & Schlueter; Dallimore, 2003). To address this dearth of research regarding the content of memorable messages that Division I student-athletes receive during their anticipatory socialization, the following research question is proposed:

RQ1: What are the topics in the memorable messages that are received by

Division I student-athletes during their anticipatory socialization stage?

Characteristics

Although the examination of the topics of content of the memorable messages which Division I student-athletes receive during their anticipatory socialization stage is important, it overlooks several characteristics that could provide valuable background information about these messages within the organizational assimilation process. Specifically, the examination of the characteristics such as the surrounding circumstances, the structure and form, and the relationships between sources and receivers of memorable messages can provide insight into where, when, how, and who communicates these messages.

A central aspect of the surrounding circumstances of memorable messages is the context in which these messages are communicated. The identification of the contexts in which memorable messages are communicated to Division I student-athletes receive can reveal the settings and types of conversations during their anticipatory socialization stage from which student-athletes are most likely to receive memorable messages. This information can help identify particular contexts that have the potential to be especially influential for student-athletes' subsequent organizational assimilation. To date, the settings in which memorable messages are received has garnered considerable attention from scholars (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Knapp et al., 1981; Stohl, 1986). In general, these scholars have found that memorable messages received about organizations are communicated in private settings and during informal conversations. Although there is no empirical evidence that these circumstances should differ for student-athletes, the unique context of sport and athletics could potentially alter the circumstances that surround memorable messages. Specifically, athletics is a highly structured group activity whereby communication and instruction occur in front of student-athletes' teammates (i.e., in

public settings) and are provided in a structured manner designated for skill development (i.e., in formal conversations; Jones, 2006). Even though the memorable messages that student-athletes receive are not necessarily communicated during practices or games, the salience and the amount of time that they spend engaged in these activities may alter the types of settings and conversations in which memorable messages are communicated to them. The following two research questions, therefore, are posed:

RQ2: To what extent are memorable messages communicated in either a private or a public setting?

RQ3: To what extent are memorable messages communicated in either a formal or an informal conversations?

An additional aspect of the surrounding circumstances of a memorable message is the time period when a message is communicated. The examination of when student-athletes receive memorable messages during their anticipatory socialization stage is of scholarly importance because it identifies specific time periods that may influence student-athletes' subsequent organizational assimilation into their collegiate athletic teams. However, the process of Division I student-athletes' socialization into sport can occur from early in their childhood throughout their adolescence, and can encompass participation in multiple sports across of variety of leagues or competitive levels (Coakley, 1993; McPherson, 1981). Yet, the exact time period when memorable messages would be communicated to athletes (e.g., during their participation in youth, middle school, or high school sports) remains unclear. To address this oversight, the following research question is asked:

RQ4: At what point during Division I student-athletes' anticipatory socialization stage are memorable messages communicated to them?

The examination of structure and form of a memorable message can provide insight into how these messages that influence organizational assimilation are communicated to student-athletes. Research regarding the structure and the form of memorable messages has produced consistent results, which indicate that these messages are brief statements that are verbally communicated and can easily be recalled (Knapp et al., 1981). Given the structure and form have been consistent across a variety of contexts (Keeley, 2004; Kellas, 2010; Kranstuber et al., 2012) and stages in the organizational assimilation process (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Medved et al., 2006; Stohl, 1986), there is little reason to expect that the memorable messages which student-athletes receive during their anticipatory socialization stage will deviate in structure or form from these patterns. The following hypothesis, therefore, is posited:

H: The memorable messages that are received by Division I student-athletes during their anticipatory socialization stage are verbally communicated.

The examination of the sources of student-athletes' memorable message has heuristic value for sport and organizational scholars alike because it reveals particular individuals who may be especially salient for student-athletes' organizational assimilation. Identifying specific sources of memorable messages is consistent with the goals of the aforementioned organizational and sport literature. The pre-entry stage of the interdisciplinary socialization perspective (i.e., families, peers, educational systems, previous work experiences), the anticipatory socialization stage of the organizational assimilation perspective (i.e., families, media, educational institutions, peers and friends, and part-time employment), and the socialization into sport perspective (i.e., families, peers, coaches, educational institutions, and sport media) all recognize various socialization agents who inspire individuals' interest and attitudes regarding types of

work, organizations, or sports. Each of these perspectives also attempts to identify which of these socialization agents is the most salient for individuals' adjustment into an organization or sport. By examining the sources of student-athletes' memorable messages during the anticipatory socialization stage, this dissertation can provide insight regarding the salience of socialization agents based on whose messages are deemed memorable.

Within socialization into sport perspective, families, peers, and coaches are the most influential agents for encouraging student-athletes to participate in sport or athletics (Sage & Eitzen, 2013). In particular, researchers have found that family members, coaches, and peers can be potential sources of athletes' memorable messages (Colon, 2011; Dunleavy & Yang, 2015; Kassing & Pappas, 2007; Starcher, 2015). However, these researchers have exclusively focused on a single source of memorable messages in each of their investigations, meaning the comparative salience of socialization agents as sources of memorable messages remains unknown. As such, the following research question is put forth:

RQ5: To what extent are socialization agents identified as the sources of the memorable messages that are received by Division I student-athletes during their anticipatory socialization stage?

Function

Memorable messages are readily framed as one mechanism of organizational assimilation (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Darimore, 2003; Stohl, 1986; Steimel, 2013). This framing asserts that a single message can have an enduring and powerful influence on individuals' organizational assimilation by shaping their attitudes, behaviors, and decision making both before and after their organizational entry. For instance, memorable messages may function to foster skill development, denote organizational culture, or

reduce the effect of organizational stressors (Barge & Schlueter). The assessment of the functions that student-athletes' memorable messages serve within their organizational assimilation process is therefore noteworthy because it reveals how these messages may contribute to or hinder student-athletes' adjustment to their teams.

Before assessing the functions that student-athletes attribute to the memorable messages they received prior to coming to college, it is important to recognize their perceptions of the intent of the sources of these messages. By examining the perceived intent of the sources of these messages, the function that student-athletes believe the source wanted the memorable message to serve can be obtained. This information is important because it can provide sources of memorable messages with information regarding how to frame their communication to increase the likelihood that it has a lasting influence throughout student-athletes' organizational assimilation. Beyond the common understanding that memorable messages are intended to help receivers (Knapp et al., 1981; Stohl, 1986), little is known about sources' specific intentions when communicating memorable messages, particularly to student-athletes (Colon, 2011; Kassing & Pappas, 2007; Starcher, 2015). The following research question is therefore formulated:

RQ6: What is the perceived intention behind the memorable messages received by Division I student-athletes?

The memorable messages that student-athletes receive during the anticipatory socialization stage likely serve a function within their organizational assimilation well before they arrive on campus. Within the organizational communication literature, it is recognized that individuals begin to develop understandings of appropriate occupations and identify particular organizations of interest during this time (Jablin, 1985b, 1987,

2001; Vangelisti, 1988). More specifically, these individuals also form expectations, attitudes, and motivations for future organizational experiences based on their interactions with a variety of socialization agents (Jablin, 1984; Schein, 1968, 1988). This notion is consistent with socialization into sport research, which has also demonstrated that interactions between athletes and socialization agents foster motivation to participate in sport or athletics (Coakley, 1993; Fredericks & Eccles, 2005; Sage, 1980, 1987). Therefore, it can be expected that the memorable messages which student-athletes receive during their anticipatory socialization stage may help foster their interest in particular sports or collegiate teams, and can help determine their initial expectations for and attitudes toward their future organizational experiences in collegiate athletics. Yet, empirical evidence regarding the specific expectations, attitudes, or motivations that are developed by student-athletes during this time remains unexplored. With this in mind, the following research question is posed:

RQ7: What, if any, influence do the memorable messages received by Division I student-athletes have on them during their anticipatory socialization stage?

As aforementioned, events and interactions that occur within the anticipatory stage can affect individuals throughout their organizational assimilation process. In particular, the expectations, attitudes, and motivations that they bring with them into an organization can determine the ease and rate in which individuals are able to be successfully socialized (Jablin, 1984; Reichers, 1987; Schein, 1968, 1988). Successful socialization is often defined by workers' relationships with their peers and supervisors, understanding of their tasks and roles, and attitudes toward their organization (Bauer & Erogdan, 2012; Jablin, 1987, 2001; Van Maanen, 1976). Therefore, it could be expected that student-athletes who have successfully navigated the assimilation process will have

quality relationships with teammates and coaches, a firm grasp of the skills needed to be successful in their respective sport, an understanding of their specific role on their team, and positive attitudes toward their athletic team. Given that memorable messages are a mechanism of organizational assimilation (Waldeck & Myers, 2007), the potential for these messages to serve these functions for student-athletes must be recognized. Yet, the specific functions that these messages may serve during student-athletes' assimilation stage is overlooked. With this in mind, the following research question is asked:

RQ8: What, if any, influence do the memorable messages that are received by Division I student-athletes during their anticipatory socialization stage have on them during their assimilation stage?

Summary

Overall, the purpose of this dissertation is to explore the organizational assimilation process of Division I student-athletes via the framework of organizational socialization and assimilation stage models, and specifically by examining the role of communication in this process via the memorable messages they receive during the anticipatory stage of organizational assimilation. As such, this dissertation identifies and combines the salient components of the pre-entry stage of the interdisciplinary organizational socialization perspective, the anticipatory socialization stage of the organizational assimilation perspective, and the socialization into sport perspective. Collectively, this research indicates that communication with socialization agents during the period prior to student-athletes joining their athletic team can have a lasting impact on their adjustment. Specifically, enduring and influential messages which student-athletes receive during this time are likely especially important. In an effort to better understand the role of memorable messages within student-athletes' organizational assimilation

process, the content, characteristics, and functions of the memorable messages that student-athletes receive prior to joining their teams are examined within this dissertation.

CHAPTER II

Methodology

The data collected for this dissertation was retrospective in nature and required Division I student-athletes to recall a memorable message they received during the anticipatory socialization stage of their organizational assimilation process, which was operationalized as the time prior to student-athletes' arrival on campus and joining of their athletic team. All data were collected in one phase via a self-report methodology.

Participants

The participants in this dissertation were 118 Division I student-athletes (43 males, 75 females) enrolled at West Virginia University (WVU). To qualify for participation in this dissertation, participants were required to be (a) at least 18 years old and (b) an enrolled Division I student-athlete at WVU. For the purpose of this dissertation, members of the cheerleading squad, dance team, marching band, and all club/intramural sport teams were not eligible to participate. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 23 years ($M = 20.12$, $SD = 1.43$) and identified primarily as White or Caucasian ($n = 84$, or 71.2%). Most participants ($n = 94$, or 79.7%) were on athletic scholarship, and, on average, all participants reported playing in 78% of their games, matches, or meets ($M = 78.11$, $SD = 35.04$). After graduation, participants planned on continuing their education or working in a variety of industries including health care, education, business, military, or professional sport. Other demographic data provided by the participants is listed in Table 1.

Procedures

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, 260 student-athletes enrolled in a variety of undergraduate communication studies courses were solicited for

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Data

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Race		
Asian/Asian American	2	1.7%
Black/African American	19	16.1%
Hispanic/Latino/Chicano	9	7.6%
White/Caucasian	84	71.2%
Other	4	3.4%
Eligibility Classification		
Freshman	35	29.7%
Redshirt Freshman	8	6.8%
Sophomore	24	20.3%
Redshirt Sophomore	7	5.9%
Junior	13	11.0%
Redshirt Junior	2	1.7%
Senior	21	17.8%
Redshirt Senior	8	6.8%
Sport		
Baseball	7	5.9%
Basketball	8	6.8%
Football	9	7.6%
Golf	2	1.7%
Gymnastics	3	2.5%
Rifle	4	3.4%
Rowing	27	22.9%
Soccer	17	14.4%
Swimming	21	17.8%
Tennis	3	2.5%
Track	4	3.4%
Volleyball	9	7.6%
Wrestling	4	3.4%
Career plans after graduation		
Graduate school	23	19.5%
Education	17	14.4%
Professional sport	15	12.7%
Health care	13	11.0%
Business & sales	11	9.3%
STEM	10	8.6%
Undecided or generic job	10	8.6%
Military & law enforcement	9	7.6%
Service	6	5.0%
No response	4	3.3%

participation in this dissertation using one of three nonprobability sampling procedures: purposive sampling ($n = 57$), snowball sampling ($n = 133$), and network sampling ($n = 70$). Nonprobability sampling procedures feature the intentional and focused solicitation of specific samples, and has been deemed an appropriate sampling technique to use when conducting qualitative research due to its ability to provide nuanced insight regarding the experiences of specific populations (Check & Schutt, 2008; Hussey, 2010; Vogt, 2005). These nonprobability sampling procedures yielded a sample of 118 participants, with 35 participants recruited using the purposive sampling procedure (constituting a 61% response rate), 41 participants recruited using the snowball sampling procedure (constituting a 32% response rate), and 42 participants recruited using the network sampling procedure (constituting 60% response rate). Overall, these three sampling procedures yielded a cumulative response rate of 45% (i.e., 118 participants of 260 potential participants).

The first sampling procedure used was purposive sampling, which refers to the intentional selection of a sample based on certain characteristics associated with a desired population (Vogt, 2005). Given the focus of this dissertation on the specific population of Division I student-athletes at WVU, the use of a purposive sampling procedure was deemed appropriate. This procedure yielded 35 participants who were sampled directly from students enrolled in 14 large lecture, introductory communication courses and four advanced communication courses taught in the Department of Communication Studies at WVU.² A full account of the number of participants solicited and obtained, as well as the response rate, from each course is detailed in Table 2. These participants were solicited with an IRB-approved script (see Appendix B), which was read out loud by the researcher. This recruitment script introduced the researcher, described the purpose of the

Table 2

Summary of Data using Purposive Sampling Procedures by Course

Course	Solicited	Returned	%
Principles of Human Communication (Section 1)	1	1	100%
Principles of Human Communication (Section 2)	0	0	0%
Human Communication in Interpersonal Contexts (Section 1)	2	1	50%
Human Communication in Interpersonal Contexts (Section 2)	1	1	100%
Human Communication in Interpersonal Contexts (Section 3)	1	1	100%
Presentational Speaking	1	0	0%
Public Communication (Section 1)	7	7	100%
Public Communication (Section 2)	4	3	75%
Public Communication (Section 3)	0	0	0%
Introduction to the Mass Media	6	2	33%
Small Group Communication (Section 1)	3	3	100%
Small Group Communication (Section 2)	3	1	33%
Human Communication in Contemporary Society	0	0	0%
Communication Theory and Research	4	1	25%
Interpersonal Communication	1	1	100%
Communication Cornerstones	3	3	100%

Table 2 (Continued)

Course	Solicited	Returned	%
Appreciation of Motion Pictures	0	0	0%
Communication in the Organization (Section 1)	1	1	100%
Communication in the Organization (Section 2)	7	2	29%
Nonverbal Communication (Section 1)	1	1	100%
Nonverbal Communication (Section 2)	4	3	75%
Intercultural Communication	4	2	50%
Advanced Organizational Communication	1	1	100%
Organizational Culture	1	0	0%
Leadership	1	0	0%
TOTAL	57	35	61%

dissertation, listed the inclusion criteria, and requested student-athletes to participate in the dissertation by completing a questionnaire, which was made available to participants after the researcher left the room.

After the researcher read the recruitment script, interested student-athletes were provided with a cover letter, a questionnaire, and an envelope. The cover letter (see Appendix C) informed participants about the purpose of the dissertation, reiterated that their participation was both voluntary and anonymous, and informed them that they could skip any question or stop at any point without fear of penalty. Participants indicated their informed consent to participate in this dissertation by completing and returning the questionnaire to their course instructor in the provided envelope. All questionnaires were completed outside of class time and were returned in sealed envelopes to ensure the anonymity of student-athletes' responses. The amount of time student-athletes were provided to complete and return the questionnaire was approximately one week (i.e., ranging from 2-14 days depending on the amount of time mutually agreed upon by the researcher and each of the course instructors). Whether participants received any extra credit for their completion and return of the questionnaire was left to the discretion of their course instructors.

The second sampling procedure utilized was snowball sampling, which is a technique that relies on the referrals of initial participants to identify successive participants (Chromy, 2008). This technique has been deemed ideal for studying populations that have closed networks that may be difficult for researchers to penetrate (Chromy), such as Division I student-athletes. A full account of the number of participants solicited and obtained via snowball sampling, as well as the response rate, from each course is detailed in Table 3. The 35 participants who were recruited through

Table 3

Summary of Data using Snowball Sampling Procedures by Course

Course	Solicited	Returned	%
Principles of Human Communication (Section 1)	1	0	0%
Principles of Human Communication (Section 2)	0	0	0%
Human Communication in Interpersonal Contexts (Section 1)	10	9	90%
Human Communication in Interpersonal Contexts (Section 2)	2	0	0%
Human Communication in Interpersonal Contexts (Section 3)	1	0	0%
Presentational Speaking	2	0	0%
Public Communication (Section 1)	49	19	39%
Public Communication (Section 2)	8	1	13%
Public Communication (Section 3)	0	0	0%
Introduction to the Mass Media	5	2	40%
Small Group Communication (Section 1)	3	0	0%
Small Group Communication (Section 2)	3	1	33%
Human Communication in Contemporary Society	0	0	0%
Communication Theory and Research	8	1	13%
Interpersonal Communication	4	3	75%
Communication Cornerstones	6	4	66%

Table 3 (Continued)

Course	Solicited	Returned	%
Appreciation of Motion Pictures	0	0	0%
Communication in the Organization (Section 1)	1	1	100%
Communication in the Organization (Section 2)	7	0	0%
Nonverbal Communication (Section 1)	1	0	0%
Nonverbal Communication (Section 2)	8	0	0%
Intercultural Communication	4	0	0%
Advanced Organizational Communication	2	0	0%
Organizational Culture	4	0	0%
Leadership	4	0	0%
TOTAL	133	41	32%

the aforementioned purposive sampling procedure were invited to take extra copies of dissertation study materials (i.e., cover letter, questionnaire, and envelope) for their teammates or other WVU student-athletes to complete. These 35 participants were instructed to administer questionnaires to these individuals in the same manner in which the researcher administered questionnaires during the purposive sampling procedure, and to return all questionnaires in sealed envelopes to their course instructor at the same time they returned their own completed questionnaire. In total, 41 participants were obtained through this snowball sampling procedure. Whether the 35 participants from the purposive sampling procedure received any extra credit for obtaining these additional participants was left to the discretion of their course instructors.

The third sampling procedure utilized was network sampling, which refers to researchers' use of relatives, friends, or acquaintances to gain access to rare populations of interest to whom they might not have direct access (Lee, 2008). This procedure is deemed acceptable for studying rare populations that have closed networks that may be difficult for researchers to penetrate (Lee), such as Division I student-athletes. The researcher contacted four student-athletes from his social network (i.e., either current students or participants from previous research studies) who were members of four athletic teams at WVU. Two student-athletes, one of whom was a member of the rowing team and one of whom was a member of the volleyball team at WVU, agreed to help solicit participants.³ The researcher informed these student-athletes about the purpose of this dissertation and read out loud the recruitment script. These student-athletes were provided verbally with instructions for obtaining additional participants, as well as printed copies of both the cover letter, questionnaire, and envelopes. In accordance with the aforementioned procedures, all completed questionnaires were returned within sealed

envelopes within two weeks. Unlike the other two sampling procedures, all questionnaires were returned directly to the researcher by the two student-athletes. Together, they obtained data from 42 participants. Neither student-athlete received any compensation for her assistance in data gathering for this dissertation.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire used in this dissertation (see Appendix D) asked participants to identify a memorable message that they received during the anticipatory socialization stage of their assimilation process into their collegiate athletic teams. It then assessed the characteristics of the identified memorable message and the perceived intent of the source who uttered the memorable message. Additionally, the functions that the memorable message had served student-athletes before their arrival on campus (i.e., during their anticipatory socialization stage) and once they joined their athletic team (i.e., during their assimilation stage) was assessed. The questionnaire also inquired about student-athletes' career plans after graduation and solicited demographic data.

Prior to being administered to participants, the questionnaire used in this dissertation was pilot tested. To do so, the questionnaire was administered to 18 undergraduate students enrolled in an advanced organizational communication course. These students were instructed to review and complete the questionnaire as if they were participants (i.e., student-athletes), and to provide recommendations for improving the clarity of the introduction, the directions, or the questions asked within the questionnaire. This pilot test resulted in three revisions being made to the questionnaire. First, the overall directions for the questionnaire were slightly altered as several key words were underlined and bolded (e.g., “think of **one memorable message**”) to clarify that this questionnaire was focusing on one specific memorable message. Second, several

questions were altered slightly for the sake of clarity. Third, some initial forced choice response options were altered, including (a) the midpoint answer for question two, which was altered from “neither” to “neither unconfident or confident;” (b) the first answer in section F of question three, which changed from “before I started playing my sport” to “before I started playing my current sport;” and (c) the abbreviations for participants’ eligibility classifications (e.g., “RS JR”) in question 11, which were changed to the unabbreviated words (e.g., “redshirt junior”). However, not all of the suggestions provided during the pilot test were heeded as two suggestions advocated removing key words such as “before you began playing your sport at WVU” from questions or altering the order of the questions. None of the answers provided by students during the pilot test was used in the subsequent data analysis.

After incorporating the feedback from the pilot test into the questionnaire directions, questions, and response options, the questionnaire was administered to the student-athletes who served as the participants in this dissertation. The questionnaire began with an introduction to the purpose of the study. The introduction read:

I am interested in learning about a memorable message that you received about being an athlete before you began playing your sport at WVU.

After this statement, participants were provided with a definition of a memorable message, which was revised slightly from the definition developed by Medved et al. (2006) in their study of memorable messages of the work-life balance of late adolescents. This definition states:

A memorable message is *a message that is easily remembered and has made a large impact on how we behave, the attitudes we hold, and the decisions we make.*

This definition was then followed by the provision of two general examples of

memorable messages (i.e., pieces of advice, words of wisdom; Steimel, 2013; Stohl, 1986) and a statement about how memorable messages can influence behavior, expectations, or decision making (Barge & Schlueter, 2004). Specific examples of memorable messages were not provided to participants out of concern that such provisions would alter or influence student-athletes' responses (Kellas, 2010).

Prior to answering any questions, participants were instructed to keep the definition of a memorable message in mind, to take a moment to reflect on their athletic career, and then to think about a memorable message that they received prior to becoming a collegiate student-athlete (i.e., during their anticipatory socialization stage). Once participants identified a specific memorable message, they were instructed to complete the questionnaire in reference to this message. This questionnaire asked about the content, characteristics, and functions of the memorable message, as well as the career plans of the participant.

Content of memorable messages. The content of the memorable messages communicated to student-athletes during their anticipatory socialization was assessed with one question (see question 1 in Appendix D). This question (i.e., *What is one memorable message that was communicated to you about being an athlete before you began playing your sport at WVU?*) asked participants to report a memorable message they received during their anticipatory socialization stage. Similar memorable message studies have utilized this same open-ended technique of requiring participants to report on only one memorable message that they have received (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Steimel, 2013). This technique increases the likelihood that the reported memorable message was particularly salient to participants, and that their responses are focused on a single memorable message.

Once the participant provided a memorable message, they indicated how confident they were that the wording they used to describe this memorable message was the exact wording used when the message was originally communicated to them. Responses were solicited using a 5-point Likert-type item ranging from *very unconfident* (1) to *very confident* (5). Previous memorable message studies have utilized similar assessments as a way of validating that the memorable messages being examined are, in fact, enduring in the mind of participants (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Holladay, 2002; Stohl, 1986; Waldron et al., 2014).

Characteristics of memorable messages. The characteristics of the memorable messages that participants received were assessed by a single question stem (i.e., *This memorable message was communicated to me . . .*) followed by a checklist of potential response options (see question 3 in Appendix D). Participants were instructed to select all response options that applied to each characteristic of the message they received. These characteristics assessed the setting in which the memorable message was communicated (i.e., *in a public setting* or *in a private setting*), the nature of the conversation in which the memorable message was communicated (i.e., *in a formal/planned conversation* or *in an informal/unplanned conversation*), the channel through which the memorable message was communicated (i.e., *face-to-face*, *in a phone call*, *in a letter*, *on TV/in a movie*, *in an e-mail/text message*, *on social media*, or *other*), the relationship between the receiver and the source of the memorable message (i.e., *by my father*, *by my mother*, *by a sibling*, *by a coach*, *by a peer*, *by my grandparents*, *by a teammate*, *by a teacher*, *by the media*, *by other family members*, or *other*), the sex of the source of the memorable message (i.e., *by a male* or *by a female*), and when in their athletic career the memorable message was communicated (i.e., *before I started playing my current sport*, *when I played my sport as*

a youth, when I played my sport in middle school, or when I played my sport in high school). These characteristics and categories were derived from previous memorable message research studies (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Knapp et al., 1986; Stohl, 1986).

Functions of memorable messages. The perceived intent of the source of the memorable message was assessed with a single open-ended question (see question 4 in Appendix D). This question (i.e., *Why do you think the source of this memorable message communicated it to you?*) asked participants to report on why they believed the memorable message was communicated to them. Similar open-ended questions have been used within previous memorable message research to identify the potential motives of sources who relay a memorable message (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Stohl, 1986).

The function of the memorable message which student-athletes received was assessed with two questions (see questions 5 and 6 in Appendix D). The first question (i.e., *How, if at all, did this memorable message shape your expectations, attitudes, and/or motivation for being a part of your sport team at WVU prior to your arrival on campus?*) asked participants to describe the influence that the memorable message had on them during their anticipatory socialization stage. The second question (i.e., *How, if at all, has this memorable message influenced your ability to form relationships with your teammates or coaches, your understanding of your tasks and roles on your team, or your attitudes toward your team during your WVU sport career?*) asked participants to describe the influence that the memorable message had on them during their assimilation stage. Similar open-ended questions have been used to assess the functions of memorable messages (Barge & Schlueter, 2004).

Career plans. Participants reported on their career or life plans after they have exhausted their eligibility as student-athletes at WVU (see question 7 in Appendix D).

This question was not included in the analyses of this dissertation, although the responses are listed in Table 1.

Data Analysis

This dissertation utilized frequency counts and first cycle coding procedures (Saldaña, 2013) to analyze the data gathered from the participants. Within this dissertation, two types of questions (i.e., forced choice, open-ended) were employed, and each type of question was examined with a specific analysis (see Table 4).

Forced choice questions. Participants' responses to the forced choice questions-- which assessed the characteristics of the memorable messages that they received-- were utilized to answer research questions two, three, four, and five and address the hypothesis. For each research question and the hypothesis, the data were analyzed using frequency counts.

Open-ended questions. Before any analysis of the open-ended questions was conducted, all participants' responses were transcribed verbatim into a Microsoft Word document for coding purposes. This document was formatted in accordance with Saldaña's (2013) recommendations, meaning that each response (a) was double-spaced, (b) kept to the left half of the document to provide space to write notes and codes, and (c) structured as short-paragraphs that were separated by a space from the next participant's response. In total, the process of transcription produced a 79 page document. The data provided in response to the open-ended questions were used to answer research questions one, six, seven, and eight (i.e., each research question was answered by examining participants' responses to a particular open-ended question).

Data analysis proceeded in four steps. First, Saldaña's (2013) first cycle coding procedures using initial coding was utilized to create a coding scheme for each of the four

Table 4

Data Analysis Overview

Hypothesis/ Research Question	Question on the Questionnaire	Question Type on the Questionnaire	Analysis
Research Question One	Question 1	Open-ended	Initial coding
Research Question Two	Question 3	Forced choice	Frequency counts
Research Question Three	Question 3	Forced choice	Frequency counts
Research Question Four	Question 3	Forced choice	Frequency counts
Hypothesis	Question 3	Forced choice	Frequency counts
Research Question Five	Question 3	Forced choice	Frequency counts
Research Question Six	Question 4	Open-ended	Initial coding
Research Question Seven	Question 5	Open-ended	Initial coding
Research Question Eight	Question 6	Open-ended	Initial coding

Note. Open-ended questions allow participants to answer in an unrestricted manner. Forced choice questions provide all possible answers to the participant.

research questions. *Initial coding*, sometimes referred to as open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), refers to separating data into discrete parts and closely examining these parts for similarities and differences (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña). Although previous memorable message studies have coded less than 100% of the data during first cycle coding (Heisler & Ellis, 2008; Miczo et al., 2013; Waldron et al., 2014), all of the data in this dissertation were coded during first cycle coding because each participant response could either cement a code or serve as a negative case that would require the development of a new code (Saldaña).

Through this process of first cycle coding, four coding schemes were produced (i.e., one each for research questions one, six, seven, and eight). Although each scheme was distinct and based on the participants' responses to a specific open-ended question, the process of developing the four coding schemes was the same. The development of each coding scheme was data driven, meaning that the coding scheme was derived directly from participants' responses (as opposed to a theory driven coding scheme, which relies on a theory or previous research as a framework). The coding process began with the researcher carefully reading participants' responses to each open-ended question multiple times to develop an intimate understanding of the data, which is an imperative component of qualitative data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After carefully reading the data multiple times, in accordance with Saldaña's (2013) recommendations for initial coding, the researcher conducted a line-by-line analysis of the data. For each open-ended question, codes were developed by noting the similarities and differences in the processes and actions within participants' responses.

The development of codes was aided by the simultaneous use of analytic memos, which are reflections or notes written by the researcher about the coding process,

potential codes, or emergent patterns, categories, or themes (Groenewald, 2008). The use of analytic memos during first cycle coding is important because it assists in the uncovering of information that is important to the development and refinement of codes and coding schemes (Saldaña, 2013). For this dissertation, the researcher used analytic memos throughout the coding process to record thoughts and observations regarding similarities and differences between codes, to identify problematic data that may not be easily coded, and to document the progress and development of each coding scheme.

Once developed, the coding schemes that were created through first cycle coding were refined through a reiterative process whereby the researcher continually revised, organized, and collapsed codes based on the similarities between them and the frequencies with which they occurred within participants' responses. This process required that the data be reread and recoded by the researcher multiple times until a functional coding scheme was developed.

Second, upon the completion of the initial coding process, the coding schemes created by the researcher based on participants' responses to each of the four open-ended questions were combined into a single codebook (see Appendix E). In addition to the four coding schemes, the codebook also included an introduction to the codebook, which explained the research questions that the researcher was seeking to answer, overviewed the study materials (i.e., the codebook, a copy of the data, and a databook on which to record assigned codes), and provided directions on how to code the data. The codebook was given to two independent coders (i.e., graduate students in the Department of Communication Studies at WVU) who were trained and instructed to assign a single code per participant response within the data. Coders were required to code 100% of the data independently (i.e., without consulting each other) for each open-ended question.

Intercoder reliability between these two coders was then calculated using Cohen's (1960) Kappa. The internal reliabilities for three of the coding schemes (i.e., the coding schemes used to answer research question one, six, and seven) reached a level of agreement of at least .80, which indicates that those coding schemes were adequate for applying findings to most cases within participants' responses to the first three open-ended questions (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002; Neuendorf, 2002). Intercoder reliability for the fourth coding scheme (i.e., the coding scheme used to answer research question eight), was .76, which indicates a level of disagreement that could potentially be problematic for further data analysis. However, for studies that are exploratory in nature and use novel coding schemes (i.e., this dissertation) Lombard et al. noted that intercoder reliability coefficients as low as .70 are acceptable for continuing with data analysis. Intercoder reliabilities for each coding scheme are listed in Table 5. Any disagreements that occurred between the two coders during the coding process were resolved through discussion. The decision to implement the aforementioned coding procedures was based upon previous memorable message studies, which have used two coders, required the examination of 100% of the data, and utilized Cohen's Kappa to assess intercoder reliability (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Ellis & Smith, 2004; Kellas, 2010; Steimel, 2013).

Third, similar to the procedures used in previous memorable message studies (Harter & Krone, 2001; Keeley, 2004; Wang, 2012), after the data obtained from the open-ended questions were analyzed and first cycle coding was completed, a summary of the findings was given to participants as a way to engage in member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also known as participant verification, respondent validation, or informant feedback (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002), *member checking* is a

Table 5

Intercoder Reliability Coefficients for Open-ended Questions

Coding Scheme	Cohen's κ
Content of Memorable Messages (research question one)	.80
Perceived Intent of the Source (research question six)	.81
Function in Anticipatory Socialization Stage (research question seven)	.81
Function in Assimilation Stage (research question eight)	.76

qualitative tool of inquiry that provides participants with the research findings or summaries of data analysis to review, with explicit instructions to determine whether the results either make sense or are plausible, accurate, or reflective of their lived experience (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba). Tracy (2010) asserted that member checking is a primary means through which researchers can demonstrate the credibility of their data.

Nine participants were contacted by the researcher via e-mail and invited to partake in member checking (see Appendix F). Seven of these participants were the researcher's students during data collection for this dissertation and were in the purposive sample; two participants were the two student-athletes who assisted in collecting the network sample. These individuals were e-mailed instructions by the researcher to review the summary of the data (see Appendix G), and to report whether this summary made sense to them, appeared to be accurate, and were possible based on their experiences as Division I student-athlete at WVU. Of the nine participants invited to partake in member checking, seven participants agreed to do so. These participants (i.e., members of the women's volleyball, soccer, and rowing teams and the men's wrestling, basketball, and swimming teams) found the results to be consistent with their experiences as Division I student-athletes at WVU. At the conclusion of member checking, the initial coding process was finalized.

Fourth, to assist in the examination and discussion of the findings regarding memorable message content (i.e., research question one) and functions (i.e., research questions six, seven, and eight), the data were subjected to second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013). Second cycle coding is an advanced technique of reanalysis that organizes initial codes into concise categories based on similarities and also facilitates further analysis.

The incorporation of second cycle coding is useful for data analysis, as initial coding can produce a vast amount of categories that overlap and are difficult to manage (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Specifically, *pattern coding* was utilized to categorize the results of initial coding, as this coding procedure is appropriate for synthesizing and grouping initial codes based upon similarities or meaning. The results of each of the open-ended research questions were examined with second cycle coding, respectively. This coding procedure produced four distinct coding schemes (i.e., one for research question one, six, seven, and eight) that were used to organize the data of this dissertation.

Summary

The methodology of this dissertation was conducted in one phase. Two hundred and sixty participants ($N = 260$) were solicited through purposive, snowball, and network sampling procedures. These participants were provided with a pilot tested questionnaire that asked them to identify a memorable message that they received during their anticipatory socialization stage and to report on the content, characteristics, intent of the source, and the functionality of the memorable message. One hundred and eighteen participants ($N = 118$) completed and returned this questionnaire, a 45% response rate. The data obtained from the 118 participants were examined using frequency counts and Saldaña's (2013) first cycle coding procedures. The first and second cycle coding procedures were utilized to construct a codebook, which two independent coders used to code the data. Then, intercoder reliability was calculated with Cohen's Kappa to determine the amount of agreement between the two coders, and was found to be at acceptable levels. Member checking was conducted with seven participants and demonstrated the credibility of the data.

CHAPTER III

Results

This dissertation utilized eight research questions and one hypothesis to explore the content, characteristics, and functions of memorable messages from Division I student-athletes' anticipatory socialization stage. The results section of this dissertation is organized according to the order in which these research questions and hypothesis were presented in Chapter 1.

Research Question One

The first research question inquired about the topics of the memorable messages that Division I student-athletes received during their anticipatory socialization stage. Overall, 116 of the 118 participants were able to recall a memorable message about being an athlete that they had received prior to enrolling at WVU. The majority of these participants ($n = 78$) reported being either confident or very confident that the wording they utilized in their response was the exact wording that was used by the source who originally communicated the memorable message ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.15$). Participants' confidence in their ability to recall the exact wording of their memorable messages demonstrates that these messages were, in fact, memorable (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Holladay, 2002; Stohl, 1986; Waldron et al., 2014).

Pattern coding revealed two general categories of topics of student-athletes' memorable messages, with 10 specific topics comprising these two categories (see Table 6). The first category is the *characteristics of a collegiate student-athlete*, which consists of three topics: *desired attitudes*, *hard work*, and *physical skills or abilities*. The *desirable attitudes* ($n = 26$, or 22.4%) encompasses memorable messages that recommend or endorse cognitive or affective characteristics that student-athletes should possess,

Table 6

Topics of Memorable Messages

 Topics of Content

Characteristics of a collegiate student-athlete

Desirable attitudes
 Hard work
 Physical skills or abilities

Experiences of a collegiate student-athlete

Opportunities
 Pride
 Inclusion
 Challenges
 Athletes as symbols
 The importance of education
 The duration of collegiate athletics

including how they should think or feel. The attitudes that were praised within these memorable messages include confidence, competitiveness, humility, perseverance, and happiness during participation in sport. Some examples of these messages are, “You can go as far as you want with volleyball, as long as you’re still enjoying it” (081)⁴; “You can have all the skills/talent in the world, but if you don’t have heart you’ve already lost the game” (028); “Never let anything get too far into your head” (031); and “Always be competitive in everything you do” (004).

The importance of *hard work* ($n = 22$, or 19.0%) is conveyed by memorable messages that encourage student-athletes to either work hard or demonstrate effort when participating in their sport, both generally or specifically in collegiate athletics. These messages primarily framed hard work or effort as the cause of student-athletes’ current or future success. For instance, a male swimmer recalled receiving the following message: “Practice makes perfect. If you practice enough, eventually you will be good” (037). Similarly, a male wrestler was told that “hard work always pays off whether it is short term or long term” (092). Sometimes hard work was even exalted as a way to overcome a deficiency in natural talent, as a male soccer player recalled, “My club coach always told my teammates and I that ‘hard work beats talent when talent doesn’t work hard’” (091).

Student-athletes’ *physical skills or abilities* ($n = 9$, or 7.8%) references the physical or athletic abilities that student-athletes either possess or should possess. For instance, a female rower remembered: “My high school cheerleading coach said that no matter what, even if I don’t make WVU’s cheer squad to explore something new because I was athletically gifted and could do anything I put my mind to” (019). Similarly, a male football player recalled that “on a visit, the coaches told me that with my talent I could start right away, and that they expected big things from me” (039). However, a few of the

memorable messages about student-athletes' physical abilities were negative. For example, a female rower recalled being told that "you'll never be good enough to make it as a D1 college athlete" (078).

The second category is the *experiences of a collegiate student-athlete*. Seven topics--*opportunities, pride, inclusion, challenges, athletes as symbols, the importance of education, and the duration of collegiate athletics*--comprise this category. The *opportunities* ($n = 18$, or 15.5%) that collegiate athletics offers to student-athletes recognizes the benefits of participating in collegiate athletics. The most common of these opportunities was the idea that participating in collegiate athletics provides unique experiences and life-long memories. For instance, a male swimmer was told:

Being an athlete at a Division I school is one of the best things in life. The memories that will be made will be some of the best you will have. You wouldn't trade this time of your life for anything. (006)

Other memorable messages noted the financial assistance that student-athletes receive (e.g., tuition waivers, stipends), the potential to be a successful athlete and make a name for oneself, or the potential to create a career path after graduation. Some examples of these memorable messages include, "opportunity only knocks once, take advantage. Not everyone gets a scholarship" (060); "that I would have a chance to impact the team and become a champion" (106); and "being a student-athlete looks good on resumes, opening up doors for your future" (077).

Pride ($n = 10$, or 8.6%) highlights student-athletes or others (e.g., parents, coaches) taking pride in participants, either for being a member of a WVU athletic team or for being a student-athlete in general. For example, a male soccer player recalled his mother telling him, "you have always made me proud every time you step on the field,

keep it up and you'll go places" (051). Other participants' memorable messages focused on taking pride in being a student-athlete at WVU. For instance, a female tennis player remembered being told by a coach: "Take pride in being a Mountaineer, this is a special place. Once a Mountaineer, always a Mountaineer" (096). A female gymnast recalled receiving a similar memorable message from a coach: "It is an honor to be a Mountaineer. No matter how hard it is, you will be able to make it with this amazing team behind you" (100).

Inclusion ($n = 8$, or 6.9%) references participants building relationships with future coaches and teammates and feeling comfortable at WVU. Memorable messages of inclusion often featured language that referred to future teammates and coaches as family or WVU as a new home. For instance, a female volleyball player recalled being told that she "will be a part of a big second family" (083) and a female member of the rifle team recalled that "this place will be my home away from home" (055). However, inclusion was not always framed in these familial terms. A female rower recalled that "being a college athlete would provide me with a core group of friends and a purpose" (025).

The *challenges* ($n = 8$, or 6.9%) of being a student-athlete focus not only on the various difficulties that student-athletes may face, but also are expected to overcome while participating in college athletics. A common challenge was student-athletes' inability to form or maintain relationships with non-athletes (e.g., friends, family). This challenge is illustrated by a female rower who was warned that "you will not have friends outside of your sport" (085). Some of these messages even framed the lack of social connection with non-team members as necessary to be successful. A male member of the rifle team was told "you will have to be willing to sacrifice a lot, time, family, friends, to be able to succeed" (110). Other challenges included difficulties that are applicable to

most college students (e.g., figuring out how to manage one's time) or specific to a student-athlete's sport (e.g., waking up early to row on a dangerous river). A female rower revealed a challenge that may be unique to walk-on athletes (i.e., student-athletes who do not receive athletic scholarships) as she recalled being told before she left for college that "if you don't get scholarship money, you won't be coming back" (032), which demonstrates the financial pressures and demands that some student-athletes face.

Athletes as symbols ($n = 6$, or 5.1%) acknowledges that student-athletes act as representatives of their team, the university, a location (e.g., state, town), or an ideal to which other individuals aspire. For instance, a female tennis player and a female swimmer were told, respectively, that "you are not only going to play a sport individually but you are going to represent the school" (098) and "remember that being part of a collegiate team means being part of something bigger than yourself, you are not only representing yourself but your team, university, and state" (012). Additionally, student-athletes are framed as role models for their fellow students and their communities as a female swimmer recalled being told that "student-athletes are held at a higher standard than other students, and that other students look up to us" (014). Similarly, a female soccer player was told that "we [student-athletes] make a difference to our community and kids look up to us" (040).

The importance of education ($n = 5$, or 4.3%) stresses the educational commitments that accompany being a student-athlete at a Division I university as an additional obligation that must be managed. For example, a female swimmer reflected:

One message that really stuck to me before becoming an athlete was that time management is a vital skill to have through your four years of competing. In order to do the best that you can, you must plan enough time for school work to be done

around your practice schedule. (007)

Other memorable messages frame school work as an aspect of the student-athlete experience that is of equal or greater importance as athletics. Some examples include two female soccer players who were told to “always put school first and work just as hard at school as you do at sport” (041) and that “academics are just as important as athletics” (064).

The duration of collegiate athletics ($n = 4$, or 3.3%) addresses the temporal nature (i.e., amount of time) of being a student-athlete. Some memorable messages emphasized the importance of enjoying the sport, given that the student-athlete experience is temporary. For instance, a female swimmer recalled the following message: “Take every moment and cherish it, it goes by super fast” (086). A male rifle team member received a similar memorable message: “Enjoy your time being an athlete, it goes by fast” (090). Additionally, memorable messages about the duration of collegiate athletics emphasized the importance of managing one’s time as a collegiate well, as a male basketball player was advised: “You have a lot of time, use it wisely” (056).

Research Question Two

The second research question inquired about the extent to which the memorable messages that Division I student-athletes received during their anticipatory socialization stage were communicated in either a private or a public setting. Participants indicated that their memorable messages were communicated primarily in private settings ($n = 72$, or 63.7%), followed by private settings ($n = 35$, or 31.0%), and in both private and public settings ($n = 6$, or 5.3%).

Research Question Three

The third research question inquired about the extent to which memorable

messages that Division I student-athletes received during their anticipatory socialization stage were communicated in either a formal or an informal conversation. Participants stated that the memorable messages were received primarily in informal conversations ($n = 73, 64.6\%$) and formal conversations ($n = 33, 29.2\%$), although a few participants ($n = 4, 3.5\%$) recalled the messages emerging in both informal and formal conversations.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question inquired about the specific time periods during the anticipatory socialization stage of Division I student-athletes in which memorable messages were communicated. Participants most frequently reported receiving the memorable message when they played their sport in high school ($n = 77$, or 68.1%). Other time periods included before they played their sport, when they played their sport in youth leagues, during multiple time periods (e.g., before they played their sport and when they played their sport in youth leagues) and when they played their sport in middle school (see Table 7).

Hypothesis

The hypothesis predicted that the memorable messages that Division I student-athletes receive during their anticipatory socialization stage would be verbally communicated. This hypothesis was supported. Participants reported receiving memorable messages primarily face-to-face ($n = 92$, or 81.4%), followed by multiple channels (e.g., face-to-face and in a phone call), in a phone call, in an e-mail or text message, on social media, in a letter, or on television or in a movie (see Table 8).

Research Question Five

The fifth research question inquired about the extent to which socialization agents are identified as the sources of the memorable messages that Division I student-athletes

Table 7

Time Period of Memorable Message

Time Period	Frequency	Percentage
While playing their sport in high school	77	68.1%
Prior to playing their sport	18	15.9%
While playing their sport in youth league	9	8.0%
Multiple time periods	7	6.3%
All time periods	3	2.7%
All time periods after starting sport	3	2.7%
Before they played & during youth league	1	.9%
While playing their sport in middle school	2	1.8%

Note. Multiple time periods includes participants ($n = 7$) who selected more than one time period in which they received their memorable message.

Table 8

Channels for Receiving Memorable Message

Channel	Frequency	Percentage
Face-to-face	92	81.4%
Multiple channels	8	7.2%
Face-to-face & phone	2	1.8%
Face-to-face & e-mail	2	1.8%
Face-to-face, phone, & letter	2	1.8%
Face-to-face, phone, & social media	2	1.8%
In a phone call	5	4.4%
In an e-mail/text message	4	3.5%
On social media	2	1.8%
In a letter	1	.9%
On television/In a movie	1	.9%

Note. Multiple channels includes participants ($n = 8$) who selected more than one channel through which their memorable message was received.

receive during their anticipatory socialization stage. Participants indicated that they primarily received memorable messages from male agents of socialization ($n = 75$, or 66.4%), followed by female agents of socialization ($n = 22$, or 19.5%), and socialization agents of both sexes ($n = 16$, or 14.2%). Additionally, participants specifically identified coaches ($n = 50$, or 44.2%) as the most common source of memorable messages, followed by fathers and multiple sources, mothers, teammates, siblings, media, peers, grandparents, and other family members (see Table 9).

Research Question Six

The sixth research question inquired about the intentions of the sources of student-athletes' memorable messages. Of the 118 participants, 117 student-athletes were able to identify an intention behind the memorable message that was communicated to them. Pattern coding revealed five general categories of intentions behind student-athletes' memorable messages, with 13 specific intentions comprising these five categories (see Table 10).

The first category of intentions is *to develop the desired characteristics of collegiate student-athletes*, which consists of four intentions: *to encourage hard work*, *to aid in personal development*, *to develop mental toughness*, and *to create appreciation for collegiate athletics*. *To encourage hard work* ($n = 17$, or 14.5%) recognizes a source's attempt to motivate student-athletes to work hard to either improve their performance or succeed. For example, a female rower reflected that her memorable message was communicated "to remind me that working hard and pushing through the pain will make you better and faster" (068). Likewise, a female gymnast reflected that her memorable message was communicated as "motivation before competing to push me to do my best" (089). For some participants, sources were thought to view hard work as a means to

Table 9

Source of Memorable Message

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Coach	50	44.2%
Father	20	17.7%
Multiple sources	20	17.7%
Father & coach	4	3.5%
Father, mother, coach, & peer	4	3.5%
Father, mother, & coach	3	2.7%
Father, coach, & peer	2	1.8%
Father, mother, sibling, & coach	1	.9%
Father & other family member	1	.9%
Father, mother, coach, & teammate	1	.9%
Father, mother, coach, teacher, grandparents, & other family	1	.9%
Coach, peer, & media	1	.9%
All sources	1	.9%
Mother	4	3.5%
Teammate	4	3.5%
Sibling	3	2.7%
Media	3	2.7%
Peer	2	1.8%
Grandparents	2	1.8%
Other family member	2	1.8%

Note. Multiple sources includes participants ($n = 20$) who selected more than one source of their memorable message.

Table 10

Intentions behind Memorable Messages

Intention
<i>To develop the desired characteristics of collegiate student-athletes</i>
To encourage hard work
To aid in personal development
To develop mental toughness
To create appreciation for collegiate athletics
<i>To respond to student-athletes' circumstances</i>
To respond to difficulty
To recognize the student-athlete as special
To respond to circumstances
<i>To share knowledge or feelings with student-athletes</i>
To express affect
To share personal experience
<i>To prepare student-athletes for their tasks and roles</i>
To prepare for future role
To prepare for academics
To welcome
<i>To influence student-athletes' participation in sport</i>
To recruit
To encourage continued participation in sport

overcome difficulties or a lack of talent, as a female swimmer suggested that her father recognized that she “wasn’t as talented as others, but knew if I worked harder than anyone, else I would achieve the same success” (020).

To aid in personal development of student-athletes ($n = 11$, or 9.4%) denotes that some memorable messages are intended to help student-athletes off the field or after they finished participating in collegiate sport. Some student-athletes were encouraged to take lessons from their participation in sport and apply them to their future lives. For instance, a male baseball player reflected on the intent behind his message: “It is important to understand that it is a tough world and you must compete in order to be successful. It goes beyond sport” (004). Similarly, a female rower suggested her memorable message was communicated “because it is a message that not only applies to my sport, but to many aspects such as, studying, relationships, hobbies, etc.” (024), whereas a male wrestler thought he received his message “to show that the sport will carry over in many aspects of life” (092).

The intention *to develop mental toughness* ($n = 6$, or 5.1%) refers to memorable messages that were meant to make student-athletes persevere at their sport. Sometimes this intention included an attempt to raise student-athletes’ awareness of the value of mental toughness, as a female rower noted her memorable message was communicated “because it proves that your mind is the only thing stopping you from doing great things” (029). Other sources were perceived to have communicated a memorable message because they viewed mental toughness as a means of being successful. For example, two female rowers believed they received their messages “because it is true and it motivates me to push through the pain in training and races” (021) and “because you will never get to where you want to be if you give up. No quitting, you have to want it” (072).

To create appreciation for collegiate athletics ($n = 5$, or 4.3%) includes sources' attempts to make student-athletes proud of, excited for, or appreciative of the opportunity to play their sport in college. This intention was primarily directed at the ability to play sport in college in general (e.g., "To get me excited for the chance to swim in college" [006]; "So I don't take playing D1 sport in college for granted" [114]). However, sometimes this intention was specific to fostering an appreciation for WVU athletics in particular. For example, a female tennis player attributed her memorable message as her coach's attempt "to instill pride for my school before I even got to the school" (096).

The second category is *to respond to student-athletes' circumstances*, which includes three specific intentions: *to respond to difficulty*, *to recognize the student-athlete as special*, and *to respond to circumstances*. *To respond to difficulty* ($n = 13$, or 11.1%) centers on a source's attempt to alleviate or respond to the various difficulties experienced by student-athletes prior to joining their team. Student-athletes' poor performance, either in practice, a game, a match, or a meet was the most common difficulty to which sources responded. For example, a female member of the track team recalled:

I was having trouble coping with bad practices and I was getting hung up on small things before meets. It was a way for someone to show me that there are good and bad days and you take the good with the bad. No one is perfect and whatever you may not do well today you can build on next time. (071)

Another difficulty that sources responded to was a lack of support from family members, as a female rower recalled that "nobody expected me to make it in the program, my family didn't really think it was a good idea, so I was looking up quotes [for inspiration]" (023). Student-athletes' experiences of stress and anxiety related to playing their sport

were additional difficulties to which sources responded. A female rower thought her brother communicated her memorable message because “[he] knows how stressed out I get for sports” (069).

To recognize the student-athlete as special ($n = 11$, or 9.4%) refers to a memorable message being communicated because a participant differed from other students or athletes. Some student-athletes received their memorable messages because of their athletic ability. For instance, a female track member reflected on the intention behind a message communication by her coach: “He knew my potential to do really great things and to get a great start into the track program” (035). Other participants were differentiated from their peers because of their participation in sport in general or because of their decision to participate in college athletics in particular. Some examples include a male football player who received his memorable message “because I was doing things kids in my neighborhood wasn’t doing and that was playing sports” (003), and a female soccer player whose memorable message was communicated “to recognize my hard work and accomplishments in committing to a Division I school” (044).

To respond to circumstances ($n = 5$, or 4.3%) includes memorable messages being communicated by sources to either fulfill a role obligation to student-athletes or due to the setting in which student-athletes found themselves. Several participants suggested that their memorable messages were communicated to them specifically because of their relationship with the source. For instance, one rifle team member suggested his memorable message was communicated because “my father was also my coach” (108), whereas a female swimmer reported receiving her memorable message because “my coach and I had a strong relationship” (111).

The third category is *to share knowledge or feelings with student-athletes*, which

includes two specific intentions: *to express affect* and *to share personal experience*. *To express affect* ($n = 5$, or 4.3%) refers to the perception that a source communicated a memorable message to express a positive feeling toward student-athletes or their accomplishments without provocation (i.e., the message was not communicated because the student-athlete was experiencing some sort of difficulty). This intention is illustrated in parents' attempts to communicate pride in their children's athletic accomplishments. For instance, one female soccer player recalled that "it was my dad's way of letting me know that he was proud of me and that he believed in me. It was a way to be encouraging" (013). Similarly, a male soccer player said "my mother wanted me to know that no matter what happened, she would be proud of me" (051). An additional aspect of this intention was that the source of the memorable message was perceived to care about the receiver. A male baseball player suggested his father and coach communicated his memorable message "because both of these people genuinely cared about me and the team, as well as our well-being" (046).

To share personal experience ($n = 5$, or 4.3%) encompasses sources, who were often collegiate student-athletes or coaches, communicating a message to share their personal experiences with participants. For instance, a female rower noted her message was communicated "because one of my coaches on my team coached on the Mon river" (066), and a female soccer player suggested she received her message "because the person communicating to me was a collegiate athlete" (086). Other student-athletes believed they received their memorable message because the source found the message to be to be useful (e.g., "My grandfather loved this quote and he decided to share it with me" [018]).

The fourth category is *to prepare student-athletes for their tasks and roles*, which

includes three specific intentions: *to prepare for future role*, *to prepare for academics*, and *to welcome*. *To prepare student-athletes for their future roles* ($n = 16$, or 13.7%) denotes that the source of the memorable message wanted to ensure that participants were ready for Division I athletics, which is a unique experience that includes a difficult period of adjustment. For instance, one female swimmer suggested: “This [memorable message] was communicated to me because they wanted to make sure I was all in and could handle the D1 student-athlete life” (002). Likewise, a female rower suggested she received her memorable message “because my coach really wanted to make sure that I was prepared to face the intensity of a college sport” (099). Other sources, however, wanted to ensure that student-athletes understood the expectations they would need to meet. For example, one memorable message was communicated to a female swimmer to ensure “that we understand the standards of a student-athlete” (014).

To prepare them for academics ($n = 4$, or 3.4%) encompasses participants’ perceptions that a memorable message was communicated to emphasize the mutual importance of school and education. For some participants, this intention is underscored by a desire to counter stereotypes of student-athletes not being dedicated students. For instance, a female swimmer claimed:

I think that other student athletes have struggled a lot with time management so their grades begin to slip. Student athletes have a bad reputation for not being good students, especially swimmers. (007)

Other student-athletes reflected that sources wanted to prepare them for academics because they were concerned for the participants’ futures. One female soccer player suggested her messages was communicated “because I came to WVU to get an education. I am not going to be making a living off of soccer” (043). Similarly, a fellow female

soccer player reflected:

In most cases, once college is over most athletes do not continue to play their sport so it is important that while in college, we focus on school as much as we do on our sport because what we do in school will be our future. (041)

To welcome ($n = 3$, or 2.5%) includes a source's attempt to greet and accept student-athletes into their new athletic team. This intention was most readily attributed to memorable messages that were communicated to student-athletes who were not West Virginia natives. Some examples include a female swimmer who said her memorable message was communicated "to make me feel like WVU is very welcoming and to make me feel comfortable since I am far away from home" (001), and a female rifle team member who claimed her messages was sent "because they knew I would be away from home for four years, so they wanted to make me feel like I could have a home here" (055).

The fifth category is *to influence student-athletes' participation in sport*, which includes two specific intentions: *to recruit* and *to encourage continued participation in sport*. *To recruit* ($n = 11$, or 9.4% %) ascribes a memorable message as a source's attempt to get a student-athlete to commit to WVU. This intention was shared by student-athletes across sports as a female swimmer, male baseball player, and male basketball player assigned, respectively, the following intentions to the memorable messages they received: "It was communicated to me in order for me to play here at WVU" (011), "To get me to come to West Virginia" (017), and "Because they really wanted me to commit to WVU" (061).

To encourage continued participation in sport ($n = 5$, or 4.3%) refers to a memorable message being meant to encourage student-athletes to continue to play their

sport either in general or in college, but not specifically at WVU. This intention is illustrated in a female rower's recollection:

This message was communicated to me because my coach knew how hard it was to make the [cheerleading] squad and didn't want me to give up and to continue sports in college no matter what it was. (019)

These memorable messages also were intended to build student-athletes' confidence regarding their ability to continue to play their sport in college. For instance, another female rower said her sister "wanted me to continue the sport in college, even though I was unsure about it and not very confident because I didn't get a scholarship" (038), whereas a female volleyball player claimed "my dad was trying to encourage me that I had the ability to play in college" (081).

Research Question Seven

The seventh research question inquired about the extent to which the memorable messages received by Division I student-athletes influenced them during their anticipatory socialization stage. Of the 118 participants, 107 student-athletes were able to attribute a function to the memorable message that was communicated to them during their anticipatory socialization stage.⁵ Pattern coding revealed three general categories of functions of student-athletes' memorable messages during their anticipatory socialization stage, with nine specific functions comprising these three categories (see Table 11).

The first category is that memorable messages *guide student-athletes' decisions to participate in collegiate athletics*, which consists of two specific functions: *increased interest in attending WVU* and *inspired continued sport participation*. An *increased interest in attending WVU* ($n = 14$, or 12.3%) includes memorable messages that aided in participants' decisions regarding which college to attend. For instance, a male baseball

Table 11

Functions Memorable Messages Serve in the Anticipatory Socialization Stage

Function
<i>Guide student-athletes' decisions to participate in collegiate athletics</i>
Increased interest in attending WVU
Inspired continued sport participation
<i>Shape student-athletes' expectations for future organizational experiences</i>
Formed expectations and helped prepare
Prioritized others first
Reinforced the value of education
Anticipated the formation of relationships
<i>Influence student-athletes' attitudes towards their team, sport, and self</i>
Aided in personal growth
Developed a sense of work ethic
Instilled a positive mindset

player recalled “I knew competition was a major cornerstone of the [WVU] program and I wanted to be a part of it” (004). Other participants claimed that the memorable message they received provided them with a degree of excitement to play collegiate athletics. For example, a male football player reflected: “Before I got here, it made me think I was going to play a lot. I was pumped” (039). Similarly, a female tennis player suggested that the message “showed me that WVU has a lot of pride and tradition and made me excited to come” (096) and a female gymnast noted that she “couldn’t wait to be a member of the team and show them what I bring to the table” (100).

Inspired continued sport participation ($n = 6$, or 5.3%) references a memorable message that increases student-athletes’ desire or interest in continuing to play their sport in general (i.e., not at a particular college). For instance, a male swimmer wrote of the influence of his memorable message: “It made me think when I am having bad days, to remember why I am diving” (009). Similarly, one female rower recalled her memorable message “kept me motivated, and reminds me why I still play” (026). Other student-athletes indicated that their decision to play their sport at the collegiate level was influenced by the memorable message they received. Another female rower stated that her memorable message “made me realize it wasn’t my time to give up, [and that] I still have a few years in me” (038); and a female soccer player stated that she “set a goal to play college athletics and I worked hard to get there. Everything I did was focused on that goal” (045).

The second category is that memorable messages *shape student-athletes’ expectations for future organizational experiences*, which consists of four specific functions: *formed expectations and helped prepare, prioritized others first, reinforced the value of education, and anticipated the formation of relationships*. *Formed expectations*

and helped prepare ($n = 14$, or 12.3%) refers to student-athletes' belief that either they knew what to expect or that they would be prepared for college athletics due to the memorable message. For some student-athletes, this function included preparing them for changes that accompany playing collegiate athletics. As a female swimmer reflected, "prior to my arrival on campus I had to start shaping myself to be ok with new changes, new coaches, their expectations, and my attitude to being 100% all in, all the time" (002). For other participants, this function reduced their uncertainty regarding college athletics, as one male soccer player stated that his memorable message "shaped my expectations by having me focus on what's actually in front of me, and not the imaginaries" (018). Other participants perceived an increase in their ability to inform and prepare others (e.g., friends, family) for future challenges. For example, a male rifle team member claimed his memorable message "was really good, I felt I knew what to expect and it definitely helped me prepare and let my friends know" (094).

The function of *prioritized others first* ($n = 6$, or 5.3%) entails student-athletes thinking of, or focusing on, the needs, interests, or expectations of others (e.g., coaches, teammates, peers) before they arrived at WVU. The prioritization of others is illustrated in responses from a male baseball player and female volleyball player who reflected on their memorable messages, respectively: "It made me think before I acted on anything. It made me realize that my team comes before me" (046) and "No matter what, do what you do for your team" (075). Student-athletes also focused on their behaviors in an effort to benefit WVU or to set an example for others who are not team members. For instance, one female swimmer said her memorable message "motivated me to succeed both in my sport and school to set an example for others and to not let my school down" (014).

Student-athletes' memorable messages also *reinforced the value of education*

($n = 5$, or 4.4%), which refers to participants focusing on their school work and recognizing the importance of education. This function is illustrated in one female swimmer's claim that "this message reminded me that I am here to receive a good education and that I must remember to take the time to do my school work to the best of my ability" (007). Additionally, because of their memorable messages, two female soccer players claimed that they knew "that there would be consequences for not keeping my grades up and attending every class" (043) or "I had to take school seriously" (064).

The function of *anticipated the formation of relationships* ($n = 4$, or 3.5%) reflects student-athletes' expectations that they would foster new relationships with future teammates or coaches once they began collegiate athletics. A female basketball player reported, "I felt that I was coming into a great family" (058). These sentiments were echoed by a female rifle team member, who asserted that when she arrived, she "wanted to feel welcomed and just like I was at home" (055). This function may be especially salient for student-athletes who are not West Virginia natives. For instance, a male swimmer reflected:

This message gave me confidence that I would be able to succeed at WVU. Being from California, I was worried about being so far from my friends and family. I expected to make new friends and thrive with my new teammates. (049)

The third category is that memorable messages *influence student-athletes' attitudes towards their team, sport, and self*, which consists of three specific functions: *developed a sense of work ethic, instilled a positive mindset, and aided in personal growth*. *Developed a sense of work ethic* ($n = 28$, or 24.6%) involves student-athletes assigning value to hard work or putting forth a maximum effort prior to coming to WVU based on the memorable message they received. Some examples include a female

volleyball player who suggested that “it encouraged me to work hard and to make sure that I competed to be my best all the time” (084); a female rower who claimed that “it motivated me to work my butt off so that I could become an athlete here” (078); and a male wrestler who recalled that “coming into school here, I thought no matter what level of competition (high school or college) that if you work hard you will be rewarded” (101).

Instilled a positive mindset ($n = 21$, or 18.4%) references student-athletes having a positive attitude toward their sport due to the memorable message they received. Some student-athletes attributed a general positive attitude toward their message, as a male soccer player claimed that “this message motivated me to always keep a positive attitude when playing” (051). Other participants credited the memorable message with providing them with specific positive attitudes (e.g., humility, confidence). For instance, a male football player suggested that his memorable message “humbled me, [and] made my love for the game increase a little more” (063), and a female rower claimed her message “helped me with my confidence” (073).

The function *aided in their personal growth* ($n = 9$, or 7.9%) recognizes that memorable messages help student-athletes with their personal lives (e.g., “It changed me a lot and made me start doing better on and off the field” [116]). Other participants suggested that their memorable message inspired a life-plan or guided them through the anticipatory socialization stage. For instance, a male wrestler suggested that his memorable message “served as a blueprint to my entire life” (092). For other student-athletes, their memorable messages allowed them to view sport participation as a means of improving their lives beyond sport. One female volleyball player noted that “playing my sport became more about helping me succeed in my future endeavors than just about

the sport” (077).

Research Question Eight

The eighth research question inquired about the extent to which the memorable messages received by Division I student-athletes influenced them during the assimilation stage. Of the 118 participants, 104 student-athletes were able to identify a function during their assimilation stage to their memorable message.⁶ Pattern coding revealed three general categories of functions of student-athletes’ memorable messages during their assimilation stage, with 11 specific functions comprising these three categories (see Table 12).

The first category is that memorable messages *formed student-athletes’ relationships with collegiate coaches and teammates*, which consists of three specific functions: *fostered relational closeness*, *developed relationships through similarity*, and *caused relational strain*. The function *fostered relational closeness* ($n = 23$, or 20.3%) references the development of mutual trust, relational closeness, respect, or affect between student-athletes and their coaches or teammates. Several participants noted that their memorable messages improved their relationships with their coaches, as one student-athlete claimed that “[the message] made me closer to my coaches. I trust them more knowing that they are here to support me” (113). Similarly, certain memorable messages also assisted in improving student-athletes’ relationships with teammates. For instance, some examples include “this message has brought us closer as a team and made us look out for one another” (046) and “it has allowed me to open up and trust my team. I know that I can go and talk to any of my teammates if I needed help with anything as I would do with my family if I was back home” (055).

Memorable messages also *developed relationships through similarity* ($n = 13$, or

Table 12

Functions Memorable Messages Serve in the Assimilation Stage

Function
<i>Formed student-athletes' relationships with collegiate coaches and teammates</i>
Fostered relational closeness
Developed relationships through similarity
Caused relational strain
<i>Shaped student-athletes' competence and productivity as team members</i>
Encouraged taking a leadership role
Promoted being a good teammate
Provided general understanding of task/role
Guided time spent on tasks
<i>Influenced student-athletes' attitudes towards their team, sport, and self</i>
Instilled a positive mindset
Aided in personal growth
Provided comfort
Inspired continued hard work

11.5%) between student-athletes and their teammates. One such similarity was mutual understanding, as a female rower reported that her memorable message “encouraged me to want to be involved with my teammates because we all understand what each other is going through, and we can continue to find motivation from one another” (028). Other student-athletes found that their memorable messages created shared expectations, goals, or attitudes, which aided in the formation of their relationships with teammates. For instance, a female swimmer reported that her memorable message “influenced my relationships between teammates because we all recognize and hold other teammates accountable to the same expectations” (014) and a male golfer suggested his message “built a bond with people around you because you all have the same goals and will do whatever it takes to accomplish them” (105).

The function of *caused relational strain* ($n = 7$, or 6.2%) recognizes that student-athletes may experience negative relational outcomes with collegiate coaches or teammates because of the memorable messages they received. There were two common examples of this function. First, student-athletes’ attempts to prioritize academics was perceived to damage their relationships (e.g., cause misunderstandings or distrust) with coaches or teammates. A female swimmer recalled:

Sometimes it is very hard to put school first and manage your time so that you can get everything done. Sometimes it is necessary to miss a practice or team gathering in order to complete school work and this can strain relationships with coaches and teammates if they don’t understand. (007)

Second, student-athletes experienced negative feelings when their teammates failed to demonstrate the same attitudes as those contained within their memorable messages. For instance, a female swimmer suggested: “The same intensity I bring into training

sometimes inhibits relationships with my teammates, especially the softer ones” (020), whereas a male swimmer reported, “honestly, it has made me butt heads more than get along with others (teammates). Some people are too soft for me to handle” (048).

The second category is that memorable messages *shaped student-athletes’ competence and productivity as team members*, which consists of four specific functions: *encouraged taking a leadership role, promoted being a good teammate, provided general understanding of task/role, and guided time spent on tasks*. Student-athletes reported that their memorable messages *encouraged taking a leadership role* ($n = 13$, or 11.5%), which refers to student-athletes attempting to lead, influence, guide, or instruct their teammates. Some examples include a female volleyball player and two male members of the rifle team who reflected on their memorable messages, respectively: “It helps me guide others to achieve their goals” (080); “It has helped me prepare my teammates for the same time commitments and to be ready” (094); and “I push my teammates to become harder working individuals. I try to make people better through their attitudes and work ethic (108). However, other participants noted that this function could be counterproductive and produce stress for a student-athlete, as a female volleyball player recalled: “I felt like I had to be a leader, and at times it was hard because I was young and my teammates had more experience” (054).

Memorable messages also *promoted being a good teammate* ($n = 7$, or 6.2%), which entails student-athletes serving their college team or attempting to live up to the ideal of the qualities that constitute a “good teammate” during their collegiate career. One female swimmer claimed that her message provided her with a “team first mentality. My attitudes and performance [a]ffect the whole team and school” (095). Other student-athletes framed their memorable messages as shaping their efforts or actions to be better

teammates. For instance, a male football player recalled “when your teammates think you are going to be great, it makes you work extra hard, so you won’t let them down” (047) and a male basketball player wrote that his message made him want to “be a good teammate and somebody my teammates want to play with on the court” (062).

Participants’ memorable messages *provided a general understanding of tasks and roles* ($n = 4$, or 3.5%) by helping them understand what was expected of them within their team. For some student-athletes, their memorable message allowed them to grasp a better understanding their role within their team. A female volleyball player described the function of her memorable message in the following way:

I think this message helped me understand that as a freshman, I have a role and I don’t have to beat out the seniors right away. I learned to pace myself and get better and not try to be perfect. (082)

Similarly, a female rower wrote of her memorable message that it “helped me remember that my coach is also my boss” (079). This function also aided student-athletes in identifying tasks or defining success, as one female soccer player noted because of her message “at the beginning of the season we set goals as a team and play and work all season to achieve them” (045).

The function of *guided time spent on tasks* ($n = 4$, or 3.5%) is illustrated in student-athletes’ claims that the memorable message altered how they devote their time. Some examples include two male basketball players who commented on their memorable messages: “I’ve been doing my best to be responsible with my time” (056) and “[It has] changed how I go about all my business” (059). A female soccer player claimed her message shaped the time and energy she devotes to school work, claiming “everybody has a part in putting effort into school and contributes to the team GPA” (041).

The third category is that memorable messages *influenced student-athletes' attitudes towards their team, sport, and self*, which consists of four specific functions: *instilled a positive mindset, aided in personal growth, provided comfort, and inspired continued hard work*. *Instilled a positive mindset* ($n = 12$, or 10.6%) includes the development of a positive attitude (e.g., affect toward their teammates, team, sport, or WVU). For instance, three swimmers (two female and one male) described the effect of their memorable messages: “It makes me love the sport and my team” (009); “It has helped my love for WVU athletics grow, during the 4 years I was here” (012); and “It helped me to cherish the people and memories I made at WVU” (086). This function also manifested in student-athletes' increased confidence, as a female rower said her memorable message “reminds me that I can do anything as long as I put my mind to it” (023).

Memorable messages *aided in student-athletes' personal growth* ($n = 8$, or 7.1%) by helping them focus on becoming a better person off the field of play or in the distant future because of the memorable message they received prior to coming to college. For some participants, their memorable messages directly assisted in their personal growth. For example, a female soccer player claimed that her memorable message “helped me understand what it means to be an adult and taking care of my responsibilities with my parents not being around me and checking up on me like they did in high school” (043). Memorable messages also contributed to student-athletes' personal development by demonstrating the applicability of sport to their personal lives, or as one female volleyball player suggested, her message “allowed me to see a bigger picture to playing my sport ... leadership skills, communication, time management, are all things that I can use beyond my WVU athletic career” (077). Other participants' memorable messages helped them

focus on being successful after they have exhausted their eligibility. A female basketball player claimed her memorable message “made me want to make connections so after basketball I can still be successful” (060).

Provided comfort ($n = 7$, or 6.2%) encompasses student-athletes feeling a sense of comfort during stressful times because of the memorable message they received. This feeling of a sense of comfort was especially pronounced during the beginning of some participants’ assimilation stage. For instance, a male swimmer noted that “initially, this message helped me in being comfortable with my new WVU team” (049). Other student-athletes claimed that the memorable message they received alleviated their stress or anxiety during difficult times within their assimilation stage. One female rower claimed her message “makes it easier to move on from mistakes I make while playing (racing) or messing up. It frees my mind so there is not much pressure” (069). Similarly, another female rower reflected on her message: “It helps to know that you have support of your teammates when things get tough” (072).

Continued hard work ($n = 6$, or 5.3%) includes student-athletes valuing or putting forth effort to succeed. One participant reflected on her memorable message:

It has helped me to understand that performance comes in waves. There are peaks and troughs. But no matter what the result is, if the effort is always there then you have the potential to achieve great things. (024)

Other participants noted that their memorable messages caused their success or influenced their motivation during the assimilation stage (e.g., “it did help with my motivation and now I am part of the U-20 national team camps” [053] or “it influenced me by making me motivated to come in and have an impact on the team” [106]).

Summary

The results in this chapter were obtained through frequency counts and initial coding, and provide insight regarding the content, characteristics, and functions of student-athletes' memorable messages. Most participants were able to recall a memorable message they received prior to coming to WVU. The content of these memorable messages was varied and featured 10 distinct topics, which included desirable attitudes, hard work, opportunities, pride, physical skills and abilities, inclusion, challenges, athletes as symbols, the importance of education, and the duration of collegiate athletics. An examination of the characteristics of memorable messages indicated that most messages are communicated in private settings, within informal conversations, during student-athletes' high school careers, through face-to-face communication, and by fathers and coaches. An examination of the functions that memorable messages serve revealed that student-athletes perceive that the sources of their messages have 14 distinct intentions, but that these messages serve 9 functions during their anticipatory socialization stage and 11 functions during their assimilation stage. Collectively, these functions indicate that memorable messages influence student-athletes' experiences in their sport while at WVU, including their participation in sport, performance of tasks and roles, the development of relationships with coaches and teammates, formation of organizational attitudes, and awareness of personal growth.

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to further explore the implications of the content, characteristics, and functions of Division I student-athletes' memorable messages from their anticipatory socialization stage. Specifically, this chapter evaluates the findings regarding the topics of memorable messages that were communicated to these student-athletes, the context (i.e., where, when, how, and by whom) in which these memorable messages were communicated, and the influence these memorable messages exert both before and after they join their athletic team.

Accordingly, this chapter is organized into three sections. In the first section, the results of this dissertation regarding the content, characteristics, and functions of memorable messages are explained and interpreted. In the second section, the implications of this dissertation are outlined, including theoretical implications for sport socialization, sport communication, and organizational assimilation scholars, as well as practical implications for athletes and socialization agents. In the third section, the limitations of this dissertation are considered, and some potential areas for future research are provided.

Discussion of Results

In this section, the results of the eight research questions and one hypothesis are explained and interpreted in light of the research conducted in sport socialization, organizational socialization, and organizational assimilation arenas. It is important to keep in mind that this discussion is based upon the responses provided by student-athletes who attend one university, are primarily female and white, and play nonrevenue generating sports. As such, this discussion of student-athletes' experiences with

memorable messages is tempered and may not encompass the experiences of all student-athletes.

Memorable Message Content: Research Question One

The first research question investigated the topics of the memorable messages that student-athletes received. Memorable messages are usually brief, seemingly ordinary, statements that often take a proverbial tone (Knapp et al., 1981; Stohl, 1986). Although memorable messages share these similar features, the topics included in these messages can vary extensively. The results of this dissertation revealed two general categories of topics within Division I student-athletes' memorable message. The first general topic is *the characteristics of a collegiate student-athlete*, which provides participants with a basic understanding of the characteristics they will need to fulfill their future roles as a student-athlete. The second general topic is *the experiences of a collegiate student-athlete*, which addresses the meaning and symbolism attached to, the benefits and challenges associated with, and the obligations of being a collegiate student-athlete, whether in general or specifically at WVU.

Collectively, the findings of this dissertation regarding the topics that comprise Division I student-athletes' memorable messages complement the research conducted on memorable messages. The first category, which addressed the characteristics of a collegiate student-athlete, is consistent with the topics of memorable messages identified in other studies both on athletes (Kassing & Pappas, 2007; Starcher, 2015) and other populations, such as mothers (Heisler & Ellis, 2008) and college students (Kranstuber et al., 2012). The findings of these studies may suggest that when memorable messages address a role (e.g., being an athlete, mother, student), the characteristics of that role are central themes within those messages. For instance, mothers were encouraged to be good

listeners (Heisler & Ellis) and students were encouraged to put forth effort into studying (Kranstuber et al.).

However, the characteristics that are often included in memorable messages of athletes are consistent with the findings of this dissertation. For instance, Starcher (2015) found in his study on the memorable messages that fathers communicate to their children who played sport that memorable messages readily emphasize the characteristics of a good athlete, such as the importance of effort (i.e., trying one's best, not giving up, and practicing), character traits such as loyalty and sportsmanship, and the ability to have fun while playing. Similarly, Kassing and Pappas (2007) found that former high school athletes were encouraged to be responsible, to work hard, and to be physically tough within the memorable messages that their coaches communicated to them. These studies, in conjunction with the current results, demonstrate consistencies in the memorable messages that athletes, across levels of athletics, receive regarding the attitudes, feelings, efforts, and skills which they are expected to possess.

There are two primary potential explanations for such similarities across multiple studies that examined different populations of athletes. First, and the most likely, is that these similarities may be the result of the practical value that such memorable messages provide to athletes; in other words, athletes recall these messages because they are functional and aid them in some way. Knapp et al. (1981) give credence to this notion as they assert that the ability to assist a receiver is part of why messages are memorable. Sport participation is a physical endeavor, requires lots of practice to reach a high-level of performance, and involves cognitive elements such as focus, confidence, and perseverance to succeed (Gucciardi & Mallet, 2013; Moran, 2013; Vealey & Vernau, 2013). Thus, it seems natural that memorable messages about being a student-athlete

would endorse the characteristics of demonstrating desirable attitudes, putting forth hard work, and possessing physical skills or abilities.

Second, the observed similarities between these studies could be due to the reliance on proverbial phrases which are often used during participation in sport and may serve as scripts for coaches and parents in their communication with athletes. For example, phrases such as “practice makes perfect,” “pain is temporary,” or “leave it all out on the field” are observed across memorable message studies within the context of sport (Kassing & Pappas, 2007; Starcher, 2015), including this dissertation. It seems unlikely that such a pattern is a mere coincidence. Given that repetition can cause a message to be more memorable (Knapp et al., 1981), the consistent use of such scripts by various agents of socialization may influence student-athletes to deem these particular messages memorable. However, given these scripts are commonly utilized within sport, it raises questions regarding why these messages become memorable for some but not others. In other words, if a coach tells his/her whole team that pain is temporary, it remains to be seen why one athlete will recall this as a memorable message that influences them, where other athletes will forget this message. With the topics of messages being consistent, the differences in the memorable messages that are recalled by athletes may suggest that receivers’ mindsets or experiences determine what becomes memorable more the words or topics which are used by a source.

The second category, which addressed the experiences of a collegiate student-athlete, is comprised of topics that have not been obtained in previous sport studies as topics of memorable messages. This category suggests that some topics of memorable messages specifically address student-athletes’ teams and the level of athletics at which they play. Although unique within the context of sport, this second category does parallel the findings of organizational assimilation

researchers who have examined memorable messages. For instance, some topics obtained in this dissertation (i.e., the opportunities, pride, or athletes as symbols topics) are comparable to memorable messages that emphasize the value or importance of particular jobs (Steimel, 2013), as these messages all emphasize the significance of being a member of either an athletic team or an organization. Additionally, organizational scholars have found that memorable messages denote potential workplace challenges (Noland & Carmack, 2014), advocate integration into an organization's culture (Dallimore, 2003), or stress the need to balance work and additional obligations (Medved et al., 2006); arguably, these topics surface in this dissertation which recognize the hardships that student-athletes face (i.e., the challenges topic), emphasize the importance of them integrating into their team (i.e., the inclusion topic), and acknowledge their need to balance sport and school (i.e., the importance of education topic).

The similarities between organizational memorable message studies and the results of this dissertation demonstrates that the organizational and sport contexts, while different, are similar in many ways—at least in terms of how sources of memorable messages communicate about them. This finding continues to support scholarly narratives that even though playing collegiate athletics may not meet Clair's (1996) definition of a “real job,” sport can be a form of work and collegiate athletic teams are organizations. As such, these similarities may support the claims that organizational frameworks are applicable to the context of athletic teams (Marx et al., 2008).

Memorable Message Characteristics: Research Questions Two-Five and Hypothesis

This dissertation also explored where, when, how, and by whom memorable messages are communicated. The characteristics associated with student-athletes' memorable messages obtained in this dissertation are largely consistent with the findings obtained from previous research studies conducted on memorable messages. In this dissertation, it was found that the majority of student-athletes reported receiving their

memorable message in a private setting away from others (i.e., the second research question), and that these memorable messages were more readily communicated to student-athletes during informal conversations (i.e., the third research question). These findings complement prior research studies that have found that memorable messages are mostly communicated in private settings (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Knapp et al., 1981; Stohl, 1986) and that organizational newcomers' memorable messages are generally communicated during informal conversations (Barge & Schlueter). Moreover, the majority of participants received their memorable messages during their high school athletic career (i.e., the fourth research question), which mirrors the results obtained by both Barge and Schlueter and Stohl who found that the likelihood of employees receiving memorable messages is greatest during periods immediately closest to their transition into an organization.

Furthermore, it was found that the majority of Division I student-athletes' memorable messages were communicated solely through face-to-face communication (i.e., the first hypothesis). This finding is consistent with the results offered by Barge & Schlueter (2004) and Knapp et al. (1981), who reported that memorable messages are more likely to be transmitted through face-to-face communication than through any other channel. Knapp et al. posited that because face-to-face communication resonates with recipients of memorable messages, messages received through this channel are more easily recalled. However, mediated communication (e.g., letters, phone calls), which included some of the least used channels respondents in this dissertation reported for receiving memorable messages, may still be important for setting expectations or preparing Division I student-athletes for collegiate athletics given that mediated communication channels are readily used throughout the recruiting process (Gerdy,

1997), and organizational media (e.g., brochures, newsletters) is a primary agent of socialization during the organizational anticipatory socialization phase (Jablin, 1987, 2001).

With regard to sources of memorable messages, it was found that men, more so than women, communicate memorable messages, with coaches and fathers identified as the two most common sources of these messages (i.e., the fifth research question). These findings corroborate Barge and Schlueter's (2004) finding that memorable messages are often communicated by men and superiors or top management. This consistency is not surprising, given that within the sport context, the majority of official positions of authority (i.e., coaches and administrators) within high school and collegiate athletics are held by men (Sage & Eitzen, 2013), with coaches and fathers recognized by athletes as important sources of information and encouragement regarding their participation in sport (Starcher, 2015; Turman, 2003a, 2003b, 2007a).

Memorable Message Functions: Research Questions Six-Eight

The functions of memorable messages directed toward student-athletes were examined through three research questions (i.e., research questions six, seven, and eight). These research questions each examined a different aspect of the function that memorable messages may serve: the intention behind a memorable message, the influence of the memorable message before student-athletes joined their team (i.e., the function that message served during the anticipatory socialization stage), and the influence of the memorable message after student-athletes joined their team (i.e., the function that message served during the assimilation stage).

Intentions. The results of the sixth research question produced five general, overarching categories of intentions that student-athletes ascribed to the source of the

memorable message. The first category includes intentions aimed *to develop the desired characteristics of collegiate student-athletes*. This intention denotes that some memorable messages are meant to help student-athletes embody the characteristics that are often assigned to the ideals that constitute the collegiate student-athlete (i.e., works hard, is confident, and enjoys sport). The second category is comprised of intentions that *respond to the student-athletes' circumstances*, which demonstrates that the source of the memorable message is cognizant of the student-athlete's circumstances: whether negative (i.e., *to respond to difficulty*) or positive (i.e., *to recognize the student-athlete as special*). A third category centered on a source's desire *to share knowledge or feelings with student-athletes* because the source wanted to impart some unsolicited information to a student-athlete. *To prepare student-athletes for their tasks and roles* was a fourth category, which recognizes that sources attempt to provide student-athletes with information that prepares them for the transition into collegiate athletics and make them feel welcomed to their teams. The fifth category was *to influence student-athletes' participation in collegiate athletics*, and centers on a source's attempt to influence a student-athlete's decision about whether to, and where to, play collegiate athletics.

Regardless of the perceived purpose behind the memorable message, as a whole, the findings regarding this research question demonstrate that student-athletes are able to readily assign intentions to the memorable message source. For the most part, these intentions--whether grouped into one of the five categories or examined singularly--are benevolent in nature (e.g., the *to respond to difficulty*, *to create appreciation for collegiate athletics*, *to express affect* intentions), meaning that participants believed that these memorable messages were meant to assist them, in some way, with their adjustment to collegiate athletics. As organizational assimilation theorists have suggested,

socialization agents often have a vested interest with assisting newcomers in their adjustment into an organization (Jones, 1986; Jablin, 2001; Van Maanen, 1976). The finding that these intentions are perceived by the participants in this dissertation as benevolent is consistent with prior research conducted by organizational communication researchers, who have found that memorable messages are more readily recalled when recipients perceive that messages are meant to be helpful (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Knapp et al., 1981; Stohl, 1986). However, it could be argued that not all intentions were considered to be benevolent, as participants reported that some sources used memorable messages purposely to attend student-athletes to play for WVU so that the student-athlete could help them win games, contests, or matches (i.e., the *to recruit* intention). What this finding demonstrates is that sources of memorable messages can have selfish intentions driving the message, as these sources sometimes communicate memorable messages solely out of self-interest.

Functions during the anticipatory socialization stage. The results of the seventh research question yielded three general categories of functions that student-athletes assigned to their memorable message during the anticipatory socialization stage. These assigned functions of memorable messages are perceptual in nature, and should not be interpreted as causal. The first general function that memorable messages serve is to *guide student-athletes' decisions to participate in collegiate athletics*, which creates interest in playing at the collegiate level in general and at WVU specifically. The second general function is that memorable messages *shape student-athletes' expectations for future organizational experiences* by providing a basic understanding of what is expected of them once they join their team, such as prodding their understanding of their new role as a student-athlete, emphasizing the needs of their teammates, taking their education

seriously, and forming relationships with their coaches and teammates. The third general function is that memorable messages *influence student-athletes' attitudes towards their team, sport, and self*, which prepares student-athletes mentally for the transition into collegiate athletics.

Collectively, results of this research question establish that memorable messages are believed to prepare student-athletes in three ways as they undergo the anticipatory socialization process. First, these findings supplement the notion that socialization agents influence student-athletes' decisions to participate in collegiate athletics (i.e., *inspired continued sport participation*; Giuliano et al., 2000; Marx et al., 2008; Sage, 1980; Weiss & Knoppers, 1982), as well as their selection of a specific college team to join or university to attend (i.e., the *increased interest in attending WVU* function). This latter influence is consistent with the organizational assimilation literature, which indicates that socialization agents persuade individuals in their choice of organizations to which they apply (Gibson & Papa, 2000; Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010).

Second, these results reiterate the idea that the anticipatory socialization stage is an important period for the formation of expectations concerning future organizational tasks, roles, and relationships (Jablin, 2001; Nelson, 1987; Porter et al., 1975; Van Maanen, 1976). This idea is evident in participants' reported sense of preparation for future tasks (i.e., the *formed expectations and helped prepare* function), their recognition of the duality of their role as a student-athlete (i.e., the *reinforced the value of education* function), and their anticipation of social interactions with coaches and teammates (i.e., the *prioritized others first, anticipated the formation of relationships* functions). These expectations are similar to those reported within previous organizational socialization studies (Porter et al.; Van Maanen).

Third, participants reported that the memorable messages shaped their attitudes toward their team, sport, and self. Again, these results reaffirm the work of organizational assimilation researchers who found that during the anticipatory socialization stage, individuals form attitudes regarding their future organization and employment (Medved et al., 2006; Noland & Carmack, 2014; Steimel, 2013). For instance, memorable messages have been found to shape attitudes workers hold toward the relationship they develop between their work and their personal lives (Medved et al.), which is similar to student-athletes forming attitudes about how sport is associated with their personal development beyond the playing field (i.e., the *aided in personal growth* function). Additionally, organizational communication scholars have found that memorable messages can create appreciation or affect for one's job (Steimel, 2013) or profession before organizational entry (Noland & Carmack, 2014). In this dissertation, student-athletes also reported developing affect for their sport or team (i.e., the *instilled a positive mindset* function).

Functions during the assimilation stage. The results of the eighth research question revealed three general categories of functions that memorable messages serve during the assimilation stage. The first general function recognizes that memorable messages *form student-athletes' relationships with collegiate coaches and teammates*, and influence the quality of these relationships. The second general function refers to those memorable messages that *shape student-athletes' competence and productivity as team members*, including their ability to determine, understand, manage, and accomplish their tasks and roles. The third general function *influences student-athletes' attitudes towards their team, sport, and self*, or in other words concerns their thoughts and feelings regarding their membership on their team and how that membership affects their personal

life.

Overall, the results of this research question indicate that memorable messages are believed to be helpful in socializing student-athletes into their athletic teams during the assimilation stage. For instance, participants reported that these messages affect their ability to form quality relationships with their coaches and teammates, which is a central aspect of the organizational assimilation process (Gailliard et al., 2010; Jablin, 1987). Specifically, the memorable messages participants received were deemed to facilitate relational development by making student-athletes feel as if their coaches and teammates care about them and are trustworthy (i.e., the *fostered relational closeness* function), as well as creating homophily between them and their teammates, upon which subsequent relationships are formed (i.e., the *developed relationships through similarity* function). However, some memorable messages were reported to diminish the quality of a student-athlete's relationships (i.e., the *caused relational strain* function) because these messages promote attitudes, behaviors, and expectations that were contrary to those messages uttered by their coaches and teammates, which then created feelings of in misunderstandings or distrust. This observed importance of similarity might mean that memorable messages that provide recipients with information that will create similarities between them and their teammates or prepare them for future membership in their teams are best for their relationships with coaches and teammates. Such a notion is consistent with research findings from the organizational socialization literature, which purport that organizational newcomers are successfully socialized into their workplace when they hold similar attitudes and values to those of their superiors and peers, and enter with accurate expectations of their organization (Chatman, 1989; Feldman, 1976a, 1976b).

Memorable messages were also suggested to assist student-athletes with their

tasks and roles during the assimilation stage. In addition to affecting how student-athletes approached their tasks (i.e., the *guided time spent on tasks* function), some of these messages assisted them by enhancing their task and role clarity by explicating the duties that they were expected to fulfill (i.e., the *provided a general understanding of tasks and roles* function). This sense of task and role clarity is indicative of successful socialization and allow individuals to better perform their jobs (Bauer et al., 2007; Jablin, 2001; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). The roles that student-athletes undertook also were attributed to the memorable message they receive. For example, some participants reported attempting to assume a leadership role and influence their teammates (i.e., the *encouraged taking a leadership role* function), whereas others attempted to serve and support their teammates because of their message (i.e., the *promoted being a good teammate* function). Barge and Schlueter (2004) similarly found that memorable messages influence the roles that organizational newcomers assume, as their participants either tried to stand out through altering their workplace or fit in by meeting the needs of others.

Finally, memorable messages were believed to influence student-athletes' attitudes regarding their team and sport. The attitudes identified by participants in this dissertation touch upon attitudes such as organizational commitment, identification, motivation, and satisfaction, which indicate organizational socialization and assimilation (Bauer & Erdogan, 2012; Bauer et al., 2007; Jablin, 2001; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). For example, satisfaction denotes employees' affective orientations toward their job or organization, and similarly student-athletes attributed their feelings toward their athletic teams to their memorable messages (i.e., the function of *instilled a positive mindset*). Student-athletes' motivation may also be influenced by their

memorable messages, as these messages altered their desire to put forth effort in their sport and to perform adequately (i.e., the *inspired continued hard work* function).

Implications

In this section, the implications of this dissertation are discussed. This dissertation offers theoretical implications for sport socialization, memorable messages studies within sport communication, and organizational socialization and assimilation researchers, as well as practical implications for student-athletes and agents of socialization.

Theoretical Implications

Sport socialization. Beginning with sport studies, this dissertation has heuristic value as it contributes to the scholarly work conducted by researchers across disciplines (i.e., sport sociology, sport psychology, and sport management) in the pursuit of knowledge regarding the processes of socialization that athletes experience during or after their participation in sport. The findings garnered in this dissertation are especially applicable to the socialization into sport perspective, which examines how athletes become involved in sport and learn their sporting roles. However, empirical attention given to how athletes learn their tasks and roles or begin to adjust to their teams has been scant, which renders scholarly knowledge on this topic limited (Carodine et al., 2001; Marx et al., 2008; Wylleman & Lavellee, 2004). Based on the results of this dissertation, it is apparent that Division I student-athletes begin the process of being socialized into their teams and learning about their tasks and roles well before their actual organizational entry, and that it is through memorable messages from several socialization agents that this socialization and learning occurs. These exploratory findings provide a foundation for additional researchers to examine other mechanisms, either communicative or psychological, of student-athlete socialization.

This dissertation also adds to the extant research conducted on sport socialization as it offers some insight regarding the overlap between the *socialization into sport* and the *socialization via sport* perspectives, which are treated as distinct lines of research within sport studies (Coakley, 1993; Sage & Eitzen, 2013). For instance, participants in this dissertation reported that the memorable messages that they received about being an athlete, in addition to helping them develop as athletes, functioned as a way to promote their personal growth or development beyond sport. This in itself is not a novel finding, as Kassing and Pappas (2007) similarly claimed that life-lessons that apply to both sport and life can be acquired from sport participation. Yet, within the *socialization via sport* perspective, the benefits that athletes may experience in their personal lives are often disconnected from their interactions or communication with socialization agents (i.e., part of the *socialization into sport* perspective), which instead focuses on participation (i.e., whether an individual plays a sport) as the primary mechanism of personal development (Coakley, 1993; Sage & Eitzen, 2013). This lack of attention given to interactions and communication is problematic as Meân (2013) argued it is not participation in sport, but rather the quality of interaction and how sport is organized, that yields the personal benefits an athlete experiences.

Additionally, this dissertation's findings further the communicative approach to sport socialization, which to date includes two studies (Starcher, 2015; Turman, 2007a). The continuation of this perspective is important because it addresses the historical limitations of sport socialization research, which has often overlooked the role that communication plays within the sport socialization process (Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991; Nixon, 1990). To date, various sport disciplines have focused on the importance of demographic categories (i.e., sport sociology), the organization of sport (i.e., sport

management), and the cognitive characteristics of participants (i.e., sport psychology) as mechanisms of socialization. Thus, the communicative perspective brings a unique perspective to sport socialization research as it shifts scholarly attention toward the importance of specific interactions and messages within student-athletes' socialization process.

Memorable message studies in sport communication. In addition to adding to the sport socialization literature, this dissertation contributes to a growing body of research conducted on memorable messages within the field of sport communication in four ways (Colon, 2011; Kassing & Pappas, 2007; Starcher, 2015). First, this dissertation continues to develop scholarly understanding of the topics of student-athletes' memorable messages. In particular, this dissertation reiterates that the desirable characteristics that student-athletes are encouraged to possess are readily featured within the topics of memorable messages (Kassing & Pappas; Starcher). This dissertation also identified additional topics of memorable messages, which addressed the specific experiences of collegiate student-athletes. The identification of these additional topics suggests that the content of athletes' memorable messages may be varied and somewhat dependent on the level of athletics at which they play.

Second, this dissertation examined the characteristics, in addition to the content, of memorable messages. This examination provides foundational information regarding where, when, and how these messages are communicated, and supports the notion that memorable messages share basic characteristics across communication contexts (Knapp et al., 1981; Stohl, 1986). Most notable of these characteristics, however, is the focus on the source of the memorable message. Previous studies have restricted the sources to whom athletes can attribute their memorable messages, meaning that participants were

asked to recall memorable messages they received from one specific source. These studies have examined memorable messages that athletes received from only coaches (Dunleavy & Yang, 2015; Kassing & Pappas, 2007) and fathers (Starcher, 2015). This dissertation did not restrict the sources on whom student-athletes could report, and as a result, this dissertation yields insight into the comparative frequency with which specific sources provide memorable messages. Specifically, this dissertation provided evidence that coaches and fathers are the most frequent sources of Division I student-athletes' memorable messages.

Third, this dissertation identifies the functions that memorable messages serve student-athletes. Prior memorable message research primarily focused on the topics of messages, overlooking the potential influence of those messages (Colon, 2011; Kassing & Pappas, 2007; Starcher, 2015). However, this dissertation identifies numerous functions that these messages can serve, such as developing or straining relationships, building task and role competence, or shaping organizational attitudes. Thus, these findings indicate that student-athletes' memorable messages influence their socialization into their teams in several ways. The role that memorable messages play within student-athlete socialization is noteworthy because it demonstrates that this type of communication is one potential mechanism that may help student-athletes transition into collegiate athletics (Barge & Schlueter, 2004).

Fourth, this dissertation adds to previous memorable message studies conducted within the context of sport as it frames these messages within the theoretical frameworks of organizational socialization, organizational assimilation, and sport socialization. The use of these frameworks is important because it provides tools for understanding and contextualizing this exploratory research on Division I student-athletes' memorable

messages, and how these messages may relate to student-athletes' adjustment into their teams. Eventually, with additional research, sport communication scholars should be able to create their own socialization model that recognizes the role of communication within socialization and athletes' socialization into a particular team.

Organizational socialization and assimilation. This dissertation demonstrates that the organizational socialization and assimilation frameworks are applicable to organizations that do not fit the definition of a “real job.” Such an application of the organizational socialization and assimilation frameworks addresses previous calls for research from organizational scholars, who encouraged the extension of these frameworks to nontraditional organizations (Clair, 1996), as well as sport socialization scholars, who noted the potential usefulness of specifically incorporating organizational socialization literature into the context of sport socialization (Marx et al., 2008). This extension of organizational socialization and assimilation frameworks to other types of “nontraditional” organizations is important because the examination of these organizations may provide opportunities for understanding the processes of socialization and organizing in these distinct contexts. For instance, unlike most traditional organizations, student-athletes at the Division I level are highly recruited, which changes the dynamic of their anticipatory socialization experience as coaches must represent themselves and their team in a manner that makes them alluring. As such, the possibility for misrepresentations that inflate student-athletes' expectations is great. Furthermore, the instability that student-athletes experience once they join these organizations can be significant, as coaching staffs are consistently changing, scholarships can be revoked at any point, and competition for playing time is an ever present feature of membership (Gerdy, 1997). These features likely make the organizational experiences of student-

athletes different from those experiences of traditional organizational members.

Additionally, this dissertation demonstrates that the aid socialization stage can be an important source of memorable messages for individuals, and may be consequential for providing memorable messages that influence employee adjustment in non-traditional organizations, or at least, based on the findings of this dissertation, for student-athletes on collegiate athletic teams. Previous scholars have argued for the importance of periods immediately following employees' organizational entry as a context for the communication of memorable messages and their subsequent organizational assimilation (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Stohl, 1986). Although a few organizational researchers have examined memorable messages that employees receive prior to their entry into their organization, these scholars have focused primarily on pre-entry organizational attitudes (Medved et al., 2006; Steimel, 2013). This dissertation, however, demonstrates that memorable messages are received prior to organizational entry, and that these messages can influence individuals' relationships and understanding of their tasks and roles, in addition to their organizational attitudes, once they begin their assimilation stage. Additional research should be conducted to determine if the findings of this dissertation regarding the importance of memorable messages from the anticipatory socialization stage can be replicated for employees who work at traditional organizations.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of this dissertation are that the results may inform and aid agents of socialization by prescribing to them what they should communicate within a memorable message and how to make their messages more memorable for student-athletes. In particular, these results may serve as a foundation to assist sources in their efforts to help student-athletes in their adjustment to Division I athletics by

communicating specific memorable messages. As found in this dissertation, memorable messages readily emphasized the desired characteristics of student-athletes in general or the positive aspects of playing collegiate athletics, and were found to serve numerous prosocial functions with student-athletes' subsequent organizational assimilation.

Therefore, it could be suggested that sources should communicate that student-athletes must be mentally tough, work hard, meet their physical potential, and focus on the positive aspects of participating in collegiate athletics.

However, student-athletes may better be served by sources who communicate a more realistic depiction of collegiate athletics, including the numerous challenges that collegiate student-athletes face. The sole focus on the positive aspects of collegiate athletics could be problematic, as the continual positive reinforcement of expectations may not provide student-athletes with realistic job previews (Feldman, 1976a, 1976b; Nelson, 1987) and could be counter-productive in assisting with their subsequent socialization into their teams, as inflated expectations are associated with employees' early exit and decreased affect for an organization (Jablin, 1984). This sentiment is echoed by sport scholars who note that some student-athletes are not adequately prepared or even aware of the academic expectations they must meet (Gerdy, 1997; Smith, 2004) or the daily challenges that await them (Gerdy; Howard, 2013). Socialization agents such as family, coaches, or peers can use this information to strategically provide student-athletes with a realistic preview of the challenges and demands of collegiate athletics that await them. This realistic preview should include messages that denote the amount of time that student-athletes spend training, the difficulty of collegiate academics, the possibility of career ending injuries, and the commodification of the student-athlete.

The results regarding the characteristics of student-athletes' memorable messages

can also be strategically used by socialization agents to make their communication more memorable for student-athletes. Based on the findings obtained in this dissertation, coaches and parents should have face-to-face conversations in private with student-athletes when they are communicating messages that are intended to assist them into their transition as student-athletes. Additionally, these conversations should remain informal and private. The timing of these conversations should also be considered, as the years immediately prior to the transition into collegiate sport (i.e., during high school sport participation) is when the memorable message is most likely to be shared. By strategically altering where, how, when, and who communicates with student-athletes, socialization agents may be able to make the content of memorable messages more enduring and influential. However, in addition to these findings, sources of memorable messages may be able to make their messages more memorable by attaching these messages to specific experiences, such as physical tasks or artifacts. For instance, messages that are intended to be memorable could be placed on signs around a team's facilities, wristbands, or t-shirts to make them more tangible and experiential for student-athletes. Anecdotally, many athletic teams already attempt to make their team slogans or mottos more memorable by making them experiential, but there is a need for empirical support for whether these strategies make messages more memorable.

Limitations and Future Directions for Research

The results and implications of this dissertation should only be considered with full recognition of four limitations and the need for further research. This section addresses both the flaws of this dissertation and the potential avenues of future exploration.

A first limitation of this dissertation was that it obtained data that were collected

at a single point within student-athletes' organizational assimilation process. This use of a single collection period is problematic given that (a) organizational assimilation is an ongoing and continual process (Gailliard et al., 2010; Myers & Oetzel, 2003) and (b) this dissertation sought to identify functions of memorable messages across two stages of a student-athlete's organizational assimilation process. Although organizational assimilation studies frequently assess assimilation via a single point data collection (Kramer & Miller, 2014), it is possible that the findings of this dissertation may only represent a static portrayal of the functions served by memorable messages, and that the functions and meaning of a memorable message may change throughout a student-athlete's career.

Thus, this dissertation would be greatly served by future studies that explore student-athletes' organizational assimilation longitudinally. A longitudinal approach would allow future researchers to avoid the use of single point data collection, as data could be obtained at several stages (i.e., anticipatory socialization, assimilation, exit) in student-athletes' assimilation process. Additionally, a longitudinal approach to student-athlete socialization could provide insight regarding how the meaning or functions that memorable messages serve change over time. It is possible that as student-athletes progress through their collegiate career, they may receive additional memorable messages or have experiences that influence their understanding and use of their previously received (and recalled) memorable messages.

This call for longitudinal studies, however, does not mean that single point data collections cannot be useful in the future, but rather that such studies should be purposive and focus on specific transitions or situations within student-athletes' assimilation process. For instance, similar to Kramer's transfer studies (1993, 1994, 1995, 1996), it

may be fruitful to examine how student-athletes who transfer to another athletic team or institution adjust to their new circumstances. The examination of this transition is important given that it is not uncommon for college student-athletes to transfer schools, and each level of athletics has a slightly different experience (e.g., competitiveness, resources). Particularly, these future studies should recognize the levels of athletics that are involved in these transfers, as student-athletes can transfer to a Division I, II, or III school from a junior college or another Division I, II, or III school.

Another single point that may be worthy of attention is the examination of student-athletes' organizational assimilation during coaching staff changes, given the frequency with which these changes occur in collegiate athletics and the challenges that these changes present for student-athletes and coaches alike (Browning & Kassing, 2011). During these changes, it is not uncommon for the majority of a coaching staff, if not the entire staff, to be replaced. This means that student-athletes must adjust to new coaches, who bring with them new coaching philosophies, communication styles, and sets of behaviors. These changes likely drastically alter the organizational culture of a team and require student-athletes to readjust. The exploration of these coaching changes may also be of note for organizational scholars, as the majority of supervisors leaving an organization while their subordinates remain, as is common during coaching changes, is a unique situation. This investigation could have implications for research that has begun to explore how new organizational members influence veteran employees (Gallagher & Sias, 2009).

A second limitation of this dissertation was posed by the sample, which was taken from one university and was not representatively structured of the student-athlete population at WVU. In particular, student-athletes who played the sports of football and

basketball were underrepresented as they comprised only 14.4% of the sample ($n = 17$), despite being approximately 30% of the student-athlete population on campus.⁷ Instead, the sample for this dissertation largely consisted of student-athletes who were members of the rowing, swimming, and soccer teams, and cumulatively accounted for 55.1% of the student-athletes within this sample. Similarly, White or Caucasian student-athletes comprised the majority of this sample (i.e., 71.2%), which may partially be explained by the lack of student-athletes from football and basketball--sports that have greater numbers of minority student-athletes (Smith, 2004, 2009). Additionally, the sample was primarily comprised of female athletes.

The disproportionate representation of White, female student-athletes from a select number of athletic teams could partially be attributed to the use of a network sampling procedure, which utilized the social networks of two White, female student-athletes from non-revenue generating sports. However, this disproportionate representation is a limitation because previous sport socialization research has demonstrated that men and women, as well as Black and White student-athletes, are socialized into sport differently (Cooper, 2015; Warner & Dixon, 2015). As such, this dissertation may not have obtained a full representation of the variety of memorable messages that student-athletes receive prior to coming to college. For instance, previous research has demonstrated that Black student-athletes who play football and basketball receive additional pressures to secure a financial future through sport participation (Smith, 2009). With this limitation recognized, it must be noted that no salient differences in memorable message topics were observed across sport-type, race, or sex within this dissertation. This lack of nuance within these results may be partially explained by the current operationalization of memorable messages or the methodology of this

dissertation, which will be addressed in more detail in the third and fourth limitations.

Future research can address this limitation by intentionally exploring the memorable messages that are received by male and Black student-athletes, especially those student-athletes who play the sports of football and basketball. Such an investigation is warranted because the socialization of these student-athletes differs from that of other student-athletes due to the social, cultural, and economic factors discussed in chapter one (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Bruening, 2005; Goldsmith, 2003). Therefore, given that being an athlete is more likely to be viewed as an economic opportunity (Smith, 2009) or source of collective identity in this population (Ogden & Hilt, 2003), the topics of memorable messages that these athletes receive and the functions that these messages serve may differ from the messages identified in this dissertation.

The third limitation of this dissertation was that the results are primarily prosocial in nature, meaning that participants mostly recalled memorable messages that aided in their organizational assimilation. As such, memorable messages that may hinder student-athletes' adjustment to their team or their ability to perform their tasks or roles remains unknown. Previous researchers have suggested that memorable messages are functional in nature and that the usefulness of these messages is part of what makes them memorable (Knapp et al., 1981; Stohl, 1986). Therefore, this limitation may have occurred because memorable messages do not commonly hinder organizational assimilation. However, it seems more likely that the operationalization of memorable messages as pieces of useful advice or words of wisdom, which is a commonly utilized operationalization within memorable message research (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Kassing & Pappas, 2007) and was included in the instructions of the questionnaire used in this dissertation, may have influenced participants to report on memorable messages

that were prosocial in nature.

Future research should attempt to alter the operationalization of memorable messages (i.e., pieces of useful advice or words of wisdom), as it may bias responses in a prosocial manner. Researchers can remedy this limitation by purposefully focusing on the memorable messages that hinder student-athletes' successful socialization into their teams, or perhaps at the least, make them think twice about playing their sport or joining a team. The exploration of these memorable messages may provide a more holistic understanding of student-athletes' socialization process, and may identify specific topics or intentions that socialization agents should avoid when attempting to assist student-athletes in adjusting to their teams.

The fourth limitation of this dissertation is a lack of context regarding the communication and processing of memorable messages within the results. This is concerning given the topics of memorable messages are consistent over numerous levels of athletics and appear to be used in part as scripts. In other words, memorable messages can be everyday proverbial phrases or common sayings that most people receive (e.g., hard work pays off), yet within memorable message research what makes these seemingly common messages memorable to receivers remains unknown. This dissertation is no different from these studies as it does not provide insight into the experiences that surround the communication of memorable messages.

Future research can address the fourth limitation of this dissertation by altering how memorable messages are conceptualized. To date, memorable messages have been conceptualized primarily as verbal phrases (Knapp et al., 1981), yet, given the mundane nature of many of participants' responses, the nonverbal components of memorable messages are important to recognize. For instance, nonverbal communication may

provide receivers with additional information or context that make a message more meaningful and memorable. Similarly, memorable message researchers should recognize how receivers process memorable messages. Given memorable messages are seemingly ordinary, the meaning and influence that are ascribed to these messages may largely be derived from a specific context or a receiver's experience or mindset. In depth interviews would likely be the best tool to reveal the details of how student-athletes process and assign meaning to memorable messages, including the importance of nonverbal communication.

In addition to addressing the limitations of this dissertation, future research on student-athlete socialization should expand theoretical knowledge regarding sport socialization in two ways. First, the incorporation of alternative socialization frameworks, which have yet to be applied to sport studies, in future projects can help fill the void that this dissertation did not address within sport socialization literature. In particular, this dissertation does not consider that various subgroups may exist within an athletic team and that student-athletes may socialize into these specific subgroups differently than how they socialize into their team, which is a common limitation of organizational assimilation research (Kramer & Miller, 2014). The lack of recognition given to the role that small groups play within a larger athletic team may be particularly problematic when examining athletes whose teams have many members or organize those members into subgroups based on position, skillset, or function (e.g., football). Future research may utilize Anderson et al.'s (1999) model of small group socialization to address student-athletes' socialization into specific subgroups, as this framework would be appropriate for examining subgroups within a team with a focus on how individuals adapt to these subgroups and how these subgroup members develop together. Additionally, this

dissertation included academics as part of a student-athlete's role without recognizing that participants may be socialized differently into their roles as a student and as an athlete. Future explorations may distinguish between these aspects of a student-athlete's role by utilizing Kramer's (2011b) model of volunteer assimilation. This model would allow researchers to explore how student-athletes are socialized as students and athletes, respectively, and how their socialization into one role influences their performance of the second role. This model indicates that individuals simultaneously hold memberships in multiple organizations and that the resources they devote to and the relationships they form in each of these organizations influences their commitment and ability to form relationships in other organizations. In other words, this framework would allow future researchers to investigate how student-athletes' adjustment within the classroom may influence their membership in their athletic teams, beyond issues of eligibility.

Second, this dissertation demonstrated that communication within the context of sport can help student-athletes with their personal development. Traditionally, within sport socialization research, interaction within sport and the personal benefits that sport participation provide to athletes are explored via two distinct theoretical perspectives (i.e., socialization in sport, socialization via sport). Future research on student-athletes' socialization should attempt to continue to demonstrate the intersections between sport socialization perspectives (i.e., *socialization into sport*, *socialization via sport*) in an effort to construct a single seamless theoretical framework that encompasses athletes' sporting experience. To accomplish this purpose, future research should explore how the quality of athletes' *socialization into their sport* influences their *socialization via sport*. In other words, researchers should investigate how the communicative interactions in which athletes engage during their participation influence the benefits they experience

beyond sport and their exit from their teams. For instance, student-athletes who have quality relationships with coaches and teammates, receive parental support, and enjoy their athletic careers may acquire more benefits from their participation.

Conclusion

Socialization has been a topic of study for social scientists during the previous six decades, including those researchers from sport-related disciplines. This dissertation continued the exploration of the socialization of athletes by examining Division I student-athletes' memorable messages as a mechanism of socialization into their athletic teams, and framed this exploration within the theoretical frameworks borrowed from the organizational socialization and assimilation literature. The findings of this exploration reveal that participants identified receiving a variety of memorable messages, which serve several functions across both their anticipatory socialization stage and assimilation stage, including shaping their attitudes, influencing their tasks and roles, and forming relationships with their coaches and teammates. As such, the role that communication, and specifically memorable messages, play in student-athletes' transition into Division I athletics is beginning to emerge, but requires continued examinations to be understood more fully.

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Technology.

Notes

1. The Socialization into sport literature recognizes socialization into two specific types of sport roles, which are primary and secondary roles (McPherson, 1981; Spreitzer & Snyder, 1976). Primary sport roles center on the process of becoming a participant in athletics, whereas secondary roles refer to the process of becoming involved in sport, but not as a participant (e.g., as a consumer of sports). Given that the emphasis of this dissertation is on student-athletes' adjustment, the processes of socialization into secondary sport roles are outside the current scope. The focus of this dissertation, therefore, is on socialization into primary sport roles.
2. The 14 large lecture sections across eight courses taught during the Spring semester in the Department of Communication Studies at WVU, including one section of Principles of Human Communication, three sections of Human Communication in Interpersonal Contexts, two sections of Public Communication, one section of Introduction to the Mass Media, two sections of Small Group Communication, two sections of Communication in the Organization, two sections of Nonverbal Communication, and one section of Intercultural Communication. An additional four large lecture, introductory communication courses were visited by the researcher, including one section of Principles of Human Communication, one section of Public Communication, one section of Human Communication in Contemporary Society, and one section of Appreciation for Motion Pictures. However, no student-athletes were enrolled, or at least in attendance, in those courses. The four small advanced courses solicited in this dissertation were taught during the Spring semester in the Department of Communication Studies at WVU, including one section of Communication Theory and Research, one section of Interpersonal Communication, one section of Communication Cornerstones, and one section of Advanced Organizational Communication. Student-athletes from an additional three small advanced classes were also solicited, but failed to return questionnaires to their instructors. The three small advanced courses that were solicited but did not yield any data were one section of Presentational Speaking, one section of Organizational Culture, and one section of Leadership.
3. A third student-athlete, who was a member of the rifle team, agreed to help solicit participants for this dissertation. Due to her team's international travel schedule, however, she was unable to assist in obtaining participants. The fourth student-athlete, who was a member of the football team, did not reply to the researcher's request to help solicit participants for this dissertation.
4. Following each quote from participants, a number ranging from 001-118 will follow within a set of parentheses. Each number represents a specific participant.
5. Several participants ($n = 7$, or 6.1%) claimed that their memorable message served no function during their anticipatory socialization stage. These participants explained this lack of influence by suggesting they already knew the information included in their memorable messages. For instance, a female tennis player claimed:

I already knew that I wanted this school and this team. However, my

behaviors as a person didn't change that much because I know what I am expected to do and how my profile affects or shapes the school's profile. (098) Similarly, a male football player reflected on the influence of his memorable message: "It didn't [influence me] because I knew what to expect from [my] siblings" (118). Other student-athletes suggested that a memorable message did not serve a function during their anticipatory socialization stage because they did not truly understand the meaning of that message until after they began their assimilation stage. This lack of understanding is illustrated by a female rower who recalled, "I guess I never realized what the message meant until this year" (069).

6. Although, many participants attributed a function to their memorable messages, some claimed that the memorable message they received had little to no effect ($n = 9$, or 8.0%). For these student-athletes, they could not ascribe a specific function to their memorable messages. For example, a male swimmer claimed that "I don't think it affected my ability [to perform]. My ability to form relationships was [also] not altered by this message" (006). Other student-athletes, however, credited their own personality or other experiences as more influential than memorable messages during their assimilation stage. As such, two female rowers reflected on their memorable messages: "I don't think it helped me with my relationships, my personality and friendliness shaped our relationships" (019), and "The experience of being on the team has been more influential than would have been anything said to me" (025).
7. There were 436 Division I athletes who were enrolled at WVU during the time the data for this research were collected. Approximately 130 of these athletes played the sports of football and basketball (i.e., 29.8%).

Appendix A

Keywords

Adjustment Stage	<i>(Within the interdisciplinary organizational literature)</i> The period of time that follows an employee's entrance whereby they become established members and successfully adjusted members of their organization (Wanberg, 2012b).
Anticipatory Socialization Stage	<i>(Within organizational assimilation literature)</i> A stage that includes the shaping of individuals' expectations for future occupations and organizations at which they would like to work (Jablin, 1987, 2001).
Announcement and Exit Phase	<i>(Within organizational communication literature)</i> The second phase of the exit stage of the organizational assimilation process, which begins with the announcement of an employees' impending departure and continues until they leave the workplace (Jablin, 2001).
Assimilation Stage	<i>(Within the interdisciplinary organizational literature)</i> The period of time that begins the moment employees enter an organization and continues throughout their employment with that organization. It is comprised of two distinct phases: (a) encounter phase and (b) metamorphosis phase (Jablin, 1987).
Athletics	Athletics are a specific type of physical sport, whereby officials, sources of authority, and written rules are still featured; however, there is an increased importance placed on athletic skill and winning. To accomplish these aims, athletics feature restricted participation that excludes those not capable of competing at a particular skill level or aiding a team's efforts to win at this level (Sage & Eitzen, 2013).
Encounter Stage	<i>(Within the interdisciplinary organizational literature)</i> The period of time that encompasses an employee's entrance into their organization whereby they officially become an organizational newcomer and confront organizational reality, learn their tasks and roles, and foster relationships with coworkers (Wanberg, 2012b).
Encounter Phase	<i>(Within the organizational assimilation literature)</i> A phase of the assimilation stage, whereby organizational newcomers learn their tasks and roles and begin to form relationships with coworkers (Jablin, 1987).

Exit Stage	<i>(Within organizational assimilation literature)</i> A stage of organizational assimilation that begins when employees either make the decision to voluntarily exit their organization (e.g., transfer, quit, retire) or are forced to involuntarily exit after their supervisors make the decision to terminate them, and continues until they leave their organizations (Jablin, 2001).
Individualization	The process by which employees attempt to influence and change organizations to meet their needs (Jablin, 2001).
Memorable Messages	Messages that recipients remember for a long period of time and consider influential on their lives (Knapp et al., 1981).
Mentor Relationships	Relationships between an experienced organizational member (i.e., mentor) and a less advanced or skilled organizational member (i.e., protégé) that aid in the personal and professional development of the protégé (Kram, 1983).
Metamorphosis Phase	<i>(Within the interdisciplinary organizational literature)</i> A phase of the assimilation stage, whereby organizational newcomers transition into established members and deal with continued uncertainties and transitions throughout the remainder of their careers (Jablin, 1987).
Organizational Anticipatory Socialization	<i>(Within organizational assimilation literature)</i> A process within the Anticipatory Socialization Stage, whereby individuals actively seek information about, and develop expectations for, the organization and position to which they have applied for employment (Jablin, 1987).
Organizational Assimilation	<i>(Within organizational assimilation literature)</i> The process through which employees join, participate in, and eventually leave an organization, with employee assimilation deemed successful if workers are able to integrate into their organization's culture (Jablin, 1982, 1985, 1987, 2001).
Organizational Socialization	<p><i>(Within the interdisciplinary organizational literature)</i> The process through which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors required to adapt to a new work role (Wanberg, 2012b).</p> <p><i>(Within organizational communication literature)</i> The process by which organizations attempt to influence and change employees to meet the expectations of their organization (Jablin, 2001).</p>

Peer Relationships	Relationships between two coworkers of equal status (Sias, 2009).
Post-Exit Phase	<i>(Within organizational communication literature)</i> The final phase of the exit stage of the organizational assimilation process, which begins once an employee leaves an organization (Jablin, 2001).
Preannouncement Phase	<i>(Within organizational communication literature)</i> The first phase of the exit stage of the organizational assimilation process, which begins when either managers recognize and warn employees about problematic behavior and contemplate potentially terminating these employees or when employees make the decision to leave the organization of their own volition (Jablin, 2001).
Pre-entry Stage	<i>(Within the interdisciplinary organizational literature)</i> A period of time that precedes employees' entrance into their organizations, whereby they are deemed organizational outsiders who are preparing to occupy future organizational roles by forming expectations for their future employment (Wanberg, 2012b).
Reality Shock	The difference between newcomers' inflated expectations and the organizational reality they encounter, which produces great amounts of uncertainty and stress (Schein, 1968).
Socialization	A topic of inquiry that has been examined within several fields, including organizational and sport studies, and refers to the complex social process that produces individuals who are prepared (i.e., socialized) to participate in society, and more specifically to the social process that produces individuals who are prepared to perform a variety of social roles within specific sub-groups that exist in society (Clausen, 1968; Goslin, 1969).
Socialization into Sport	A sport socialization perspective, which examines the period of time when athletes begin to develop interest in and participate in sport (Sage & Eitzen, 2013).
Socialization via Sport	A sport socialization perspective, which examines the attitudes, behaviors, and values that athletes acquire through playing sport (Sage & Eitzen, 2013).
Sport	A codified and structured physical activity that is played by designated sides or opposing forces (i.e., teams) according to systemized rules and regulations until there is a winner. Sport is overseen by some sort of league or organization, is conducted

Student-Athletes	<p>under the guidance of sources of formal authority (e.g., coaches, associations, educational institutions), and requires the investment of greater resources (e.g., time, energy, ego) than ordinary play or games (Sage & Eitzen, 2013).</p> <p>A term utilized to describe athletes that play a sport for a team associated with an educational institution, and by doing so must also attend that institution as a student (NCAA, 2015).</p>
Supervisor-Subordinate Relationships	<p>Assigned relationships between organizational members of differing status, one of whom has direct authority over the other.</p>
Unfreezing Period	<p>The period of time when newcomers adjust their initial expectations to match their actual work situations, which can sometimes be a difficult and lengthy process (Schein, 1968).</p>
Vocational Anticipatory Socialization	<p><i>(Within organizational assimilation literature)</i> A process within the Anticipatory Socialization Stage, whereby individuals begin to form expectations about, and preferences for, a particular occupation (Jablin, 1987, 2001).</p>

Appendix B

Recruitment Script

“My name is Gregory A. Cranmer and I am conducting a research study to learn more about the memorable and influential messages that college athletes receive before joining their collegiate sports teams with Principal Investigator Dr. Scott Myers of the Department of Communication Studies. This research is being conducted as part of an on-going study and my dissertation. You must be at least 18 years or older to participate in this study and be a current member of a varsity athletic team here at WVU.

If you desire to participate, I am asking you to complete a short survey about a particular and influential message you received prior to signing your letter of intent. All your responses should be focused on this one message.

Additionally, if you desire to do so, you may take extra copies of this cover letters, surveys, and envelopes to a friend who is also at least 18 years old and is also a member of a varsity athletic team at WVU. You should provide them with the same instruction you have received here today.

After I leave this room, if you are interested in participating in this study you can come get copies of the cover letter, the survey, and envelopes from your instructor. You are to take these materials home, to remove the cover letter and write your name on the cover letter only (i.e., so you may receive credit), to complete this survey outside of class time and place it in the envelope with which you have been provided, and return all materials (i.e., your cover letter with your name and the completed survey sealed within an unmarked white envelope) by [a date that was agreed upon by the instructor and researcher]. You must also return the materials of anyone you gave the survey to in the same manner and at the same time.

This survey will be kept anonymous. You should not place any marks of identification anywhere on the survey or the envelope. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can stop at any point without fear of penalty. Your class standing, your class grades, your job status, and your membership on an athletic team cannot be affected by either your refusal to participate in, or withdrawal from participation in, this study. There are no risks associated with participation in this study. Completing and returning this survey indicates that you have agreed to participate in this study. This survey takes about 15 minutes to complete.

If you would like more information about this research project, please feel free to contact me at either (304) 293-3905 or gcranmer@mix.wvu.edu. This study has been acknowledged by West Virginia University's Institutional Review Board.

Thank you.”

Appendix C

Cover Letter

April, 2015

Dear Participant:

This letter is a request for you to take part in a research project designed to learn more about the memorable and influential messages that college student-athletes receive about being an athlete prior to joining their collegiate athletic teams. This research study is being conducted by Principal Investigator Dr. Scott A. Myers and Co-Investigator Gregory A. Cranmer. This study is the focus of the Co-Investigator's dissertation being completed under the guidance of the Primary Investigator in the Department of Communication Studies at WVU.

You must be 18 years old or older and be an enrolled Division I athlete to participate in this study.

Please complete the following questionnaire in reference to a memorable message you received prior to joining your athletic team at WVU.

Read each set of instructions and statements carefully and respond to the best of your ability. There is neither a right nor a wrong answer to any question. If you are unable to answer a question, you may skip the question by leaving it blank. Your participation in this study is voluntary and your identity is anonymous. You can stop at any point without fear of penalty.

There are no risks associated with participation in this study. Your class rank and standing with your athletic team cannot be affected in any way.

Completing and returning this questionnaire indicates that you have agreed to participate in this study. This questionnaire takes about 15 minutes to complete.

If you would like more information about this research project, please feel free to get in touch with me at either (304) 293-3905 or Gcranmer@mix.wvu.edu. This study has been acknowledged by the West Virginia University Institutional Review Board.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Myers, Ph.D.
Professor
Principal Investigator

Gregory A. Cranmer, M.A.
Ph.D. Candidate
Co-Investigator

Appendix D

Questionnaire

Introduction: I am interested in learning about a memorable message that you received about being an athlete **before** you began playing your sport at WVU.

A memorable message is a *message that is easily remembered and has made a large impact on how we behave, the attitudes we hold, and the decisions we make.*

A memorable message can be a piece of advice or some words of wisdom that you have received, which has influenced your behavior, expectations, or decision making.

Directions: Keeping in mind that memorable messages are easily remembered and very influential, take a moment to reflect on your athletic career and think of one memorable message that you received about being an athlete before you began playing your sport at WVU. This message could have influenced your participation in your sport, the expectations you created for being part of your WVU team or a Division I athlete, or other decisions you have made during your sport career (e.g., selecting a particular university, coach, or team). After you have thought of a message, complete this questionnaire about this message alone.

1. What is **one** memorable message that was communicated to you about being an athlete **before** you began playing your sport at WVU? (Respond by writing this message in the below space).

2. How confident are you that the wording you provided is the exact wording that was used when the memorable message was originally communicated to you? (Circle one answer).

*Very
unconfident*

Unconfident

*Neither Unconfident
or Confident*

Confident

*Very
confident*

3. **This memorable message was communicated to me . . .** (For each section [A through F], check all answers that apply).

A. ☐ In a public setting ☐ In a private setting

B. ☐ In an formal/planned conversation

☐ In an informal/unplanned conversation

C. ☐ Face-to-face ☐ In a phone call ☐ In a letter
☐ On TV/In a movie ☐ In an e-mail/text ☐ On social media
☐ Other:_____

D. ☐ By my father ☐ By my mother ☐ By a sibling
☐ By a coach ☐ By a peer ☐ By my grandparents
☐ By a teammate ☐ By a teacher ☐ By the media
☐ By other family members ☐ Other:_____

This memorable message was communicated to me . . . (For each section [A through F], check all answers that apply).

E. ☐ By a male ☐ By a female

F. ☐ Before I started playing my current sport
☐ When I played my sport as a youth
☐ When I played my sport in middle school
☐ When I played my sport in high school

4. **Why do you think this memorable message was communicated to you?**
 (Respond below).

5. How, if at all, did this memorable message shape your expectations, attitudes, and/or motivation for being a part of your sport team at WVU prior to your arrival on campus? (Respond below).

6. How, if at all, has this memorable message influenced your ability to form relationships with your teammates or coaches, your understanding of your tasks and roles on your team, or your attitudes toward your team during your WVU sport career? (Respond below).

Instructions: Please answer the following questions **about yourself**.

7. What are your career plans after you graduate? (Respond below).

8. What is your sex? (Circle one answer).

Male

Female

9. What is your age? (Respond on the line)._____

10. What is your ethnicity? (Circle one answer).

White/Caucasian

Black/African American

Hispanic/Latino/Chicano

Asian/Asian American

Other: _____

11. What is your official eligibility class with your sport team? (Circle one answer).

Freshman

Redshirt Freshman

Sophomore

Redshirt Sophomore

Junior

Redshirt Junior

Senior

Redshirt Senior

12. What sport do you play at WVU? (Circle one answer).

Baseball

Basketball

Cross Country

Football

Golf

Gymnastics

Rifle

Rowing

Soccer

Swimming

Tennis

Track

Volleyball

Wrestling

13. In the past season, in what percentage (0-100%) of the games/matches/contests held did you play or participate? (Respond on the line)._____ %

14. Are you currently on an athletic scholarship at WVU? (Circle one answer).

Yes

No

Thank you for your participation!

Please place this questionnaire in the blank envelope and return it to the person who gave it to you.

Appendix E

Codebook

CRANMER DISSERTATION: CODE BOOK

Appreciation & Purpose: Thank you for agreeing to help me with my dissertation by agreeing to be coders of my qualitative data. The coding of this data is a very important component of my study as it will be used to answer four questions:

- Q1: What is the content of the memorable messages that Division I student-athletes receive during their anticipatory socialization stage?
- Q2: What is the perceived intention behind the memorable messages received by Division I student-athletes?
- Q3: What, if any, influence do the memorable messages received by Division I student-athletes have on them during their anticipatory socialization stage?
- Q4: What, if any, influence do the memorable messages that are received by Division I athletes during their anticipatory socialization stage have on them during their assimilation stage?

Coding Materials: Within this packet you will find four sets of four separate coding documents – one set for each research question.

- The first of these documents is a codebook, which contains a coding scheme. There is a codebook for each research question. The research question that corresponds with each codebook is labeled at the top of the codebook. These codebooks are independent of each other (i.e., each codebook should only be used to examine the data for which it was designed).
- The second of these documents is a copy of the data provided by the participants of this dissertation. The data is a verbatim accounting of what the participants reported in open ended surveys. Each data packet is already organized and divided by the research question it answers. The research question that data corresponds with is labeled at the top of the data packet.
- The third of these documents is a copy of a databook. The databook is where you will record your codes. Each data book corresponds with a research question. The corresponding research question is labeled at the top of each databook.
- The fourth document is a copy of the disagreement databook. This is the databook where you will resolve any disagreements between you and the other coder regarding assigned codes.

Coding Process: The aforementioned documents are already organized into four sets by research question for your convenience. You are to follow the procedures outlined at the beginning of each **codebook** and to assign codes to the corresponding **data**, which were provided by the participants. Below are some general rules you should abide by when you are in the coding process:

- You are to only use the codebook to assign a code to a datum.
- Consult the codebook carefully and accurately when assigning codes.
- Do not take for granted your understanding of the codebook, consistently consult the codebook for each code you assign.
- Do not substitute your understanding of the code labels for the actual conceptualizations outlined by the researcher.
- Do not discuss the coding scheme or process with anyone at this point.

When you have assigned a code you are to write that code in the corresponding section of the **databook** (i.e., this is not the disagreement, you will use that after you have completed coding all of your data). You will follow this process four times – once for each research question (i.e., Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4) – until you have completed coding your data. Do

Resolving Disagreements: When both of you have completed coding all of the data, please confer with each other. You are not to discuss any codes or the data until both of you have completed coding all of the data yourselves. Once both of you have completed coding all of the data, compare **databooks** to identify where you have disagreements about which codes best fit the data. Discuss each disagreement you have with the other coder until you come to a conclusion about which is the best code for disputed **data**. This discussion should be based upon the provided **codebooks** alone (i.e., do not resolve disagreements based on your own thoughts, interpretations, or ideas that are not from the codebook). When you have resolved a disagreement place that new code that you have agreed upon in each of your **disagreement databooks**. If you originally agreed upon a code in the first databook, you will leave that spot blank in the disagreement databook. Each of you will be asked to hand in your own disagreement databook to confirm that a consensus was in fact reached.

Turning in Materials: Once you have coded all the data and resolved all your disagreements, you are now able to return all coding materials to the researcher (you already have my contact information). I would like all the databooks, the disagreement data books, and any other documents that you wrote on. If you took notes during the process to help you code the data, I would also like those as well.

**THANK YOU AGAIN FOR AGREEING TO HELP ME WITH MY
DISSERTATION. YOU MAY TURN THE PAGE AND START CODING WHEN
YOU ARE READY.**

What are the topics of content in the memorable messages that Division I student-athletes receive during their anticipatory socialization stage?

1. **Desirable attitudes** –a message that recommends a particular mental or cognitive characteristic that a student-athlete should possess, including how a student-athlete should think or feel.
 - May advocate for the importance of enjoying or loving sport.
 - May recognize the need to be mentally tough, fearless, confident, or perseverant.
 - May value intense focus or concentration.
2. **Hard work** – a message that recognizes the importance of a student-athlete working hard or demonstrating effort in sport. These messages also can focus on the outcomes of this energy.
 - May recognize the role of practice, hard work, or effort in future or current success.
 - May advocate work ethic or hard work as virtuous.
3. **Physical skills or abilities** –a message that addresses the physical or athletic abilities that a student-athlete possesses or should possess.
 - May praise a student-athlete for their athletic ability.
 - May advocate student-athletes' need to be able to perform a particular skill.
 - May recognize the need to be able to improve the skills of teammates.
4. **Opportunities** –a message that addresses the benefits or opportunities (on and off the field of play) that result from being a student-athlete.
 - May advocate that playing college sport may lead to jobs or careers after graduation.
 - May frame college sport as a source of great memories or experiences.
 - May suggest that playing college sport or at WVU could mean making a name for oneself, leaving their mark on the program, making money, or having access to great resources.
5. **Inclusion** –a message that suggests that being a student-athlete means building relationships with a team or gaining a new home.
 - May stress WVU or Morgantown as a new home.
 - May advocate joining the team means joining a new family.
 - May suggest sport will be the source of new relationships or social networks.
6. **Athletes as symbols** –a message that suggests being a student-athlete means representing a team, school, location, or ideal that others strive to meet.

- May advocate athletes are role model for other students, children, or people in general.
 - May frame athletes as representatives of a school, team, location, or people.
7. **The duration of college athletics** –a message that addresses the temporal nature (i.e., amount of time) of being a student-athlete.
- May acknowledge how quickly college goes.
 - May recognize the amount of time that one can be a student-athlete.
8. **The importance of education** –a message that suggests that being a student-athlete also includes an educational commitment.
- May advocate spending time on school.
 - May advocate that school is just as important as sport.
9. **Pride** –a message that recognizes issues of pride either regarding a WVU athletic team or in the student-athlete themselves. For instance, messages may tout WVU athletic teams as special team, as possessing a unique culture, or accomplishing many feats; or may demonstrate others' pride in the student-athlete.
- May denote mountaineer “pride.”
 - May emphasize the accomplishments of the school or team.
 - May imply being a student-athlete makes one's parents, family, or friends proud.
10. **Challenges** –a message that addresses the difficulties that student-athletes will face and/or are expected to overcome.
- May address the need to be on scholarship to afford college.
 - May suggest lacking friends or social life or general sacrifices that student-athletes must make.
 - May recognize other generic difficulties that are faced by student-athletes.

What is the perceived intention behind the memorable messages received by Division I student-athletes?

1. **To recruit** – the message was communicated to get the student-athlete to commit to their team or because the student-athlete is in the recruiting process.
 - Was sent to get the student-athlete to come to WVU.
 - Was sent to get the student-athlete to join a team (at WVU or elsewhere).
 - Was sent because the student-athlete was deciding which school to commit to.
2. **To encourage continued participation** – the message was communicated to encourage the student-athlete to continue playing sport in general (i.e., not explicitly at WVU).
 - Was sent to get the student-athlete to continue to play sport in general.
 - Was sent to get the student-athlete to continue to play sport in college.
3. **To respond to difficulty** – the message was communicated because the student-athlete was experiencing a difficulty of some sort at the time the message was delivered.
 - Was sent because the student-athlete performed poorly.
 - Was sent because the student-athlete experienced a difficulty either sport related or not (e.g., stress, a fight with parents, etc).
4. **To recognize the student-athlete as special**– the message was communicated to recognize that the student-athlete is special in some way.
 - Was sent because the student-athlete possesses a specific athletic skillset or potential.
 - Was sent because the student-athlete was doing positive things (e.g., being a team player, staying out of trouble, working hard).
5. **To share personal experience** – the message was communicated because the source experienced a similar situation or found the message they communicated to be to be useful for themselves.
 - The source was also a college athlete or had experience with a particular sport.
 - The source liked or found the message they sent to be useful.
6. **To express affect** - the message was communicated to express care for, support to, or pride in the student-athlete or their accomplishments without provocation.
 - Was sent because the source cares for or was supporting the student-athlete.
 - Was sent to demonstrate pride in the student-athlete.

7. **To welcome** - the message was communicated to welcome the student-athlete to their athletic team or make them feel included or comfortable in their new athletic team/WVU.
 - Was sent to make the student-athlete feel welcomed or at home with their team or WVU.
8. **To prepare for future role** – the message was communicated to prepare or check the preparation of the receiver for being a student-athlete (e.g., the seriousness, commitment, standards, sacrifices, or general expectations of athletes).
 - Was sent so student-athlete knew what to expect or to prepare for in college athletics.
 - Was sent so student-athlete was aware of the magnitude, commitments, opportunities, and challenges of college sport.
9. **To prepare for academics** - the message was communicated to emphasize the importance of school and education to student-athletes.
 - Was sent so student-athlete was aware of the time commitment or importance of school.
10. **To encourage hard work** - the message was communicated to motivate the student-athlete to get them to perform better or to succeed.
 - Was sent to motivate the student-athlete to set and accomplish a goal.
 - Was sent to advocate working hard or putting forth effort.
11. **To create appreciation for college sport** - the message was communicated to the student-athlete so they'd be proud of, excited for, or appreciative of the opportunity to play sport.
 - Was sent so the student-athlete would be excited about playing college sport.
 - Was sent so the student-athlete would appreciate being a college athlete.
 - Was sent so the student-athlete to be proud of being a member of their team.
12. **To develop mental toughness** – the message was communicated to make the student-athlete be confident, mentally tough, or perseverant.
 - Was sent to get the student-athlete to not let things get in their head.
 - Was sent to get the student-athlete to persevere or to not to give up.
13. **To aid in personal development** - the message was communicated to help the student-athlete off the field of play or well after they finish their eligibility.
 - Was sent to help the student-athlete develop as a person.

- Was sent to teach a life lesson that goes beyond sport or in their distant future.

14. **To respond to circumstances** – the message was communicated because of a role obligation (e.g., they are a coach or a dad) to the student-athlete or because of the setting the student-athletes find themselves in (e.g., high school).

- Was sent because source was a coach, a father, sibling, older teammate, etc.
- Was sent because the athlete was in high school.

What, if any, influence do the memorable messages received by Division I student-athletes have on them during their anticipatory socialization stage?

1. **Increased interest in attending WVU** – The message made the student-athlete interested or excited to play sports at WVU or to join a particular athletic program/team at WVU.

- Made the student-athlete want to play sports at WVU.
- Made the student-athlete excited about coming to WVU.
- Helped the student-athlete select WVU as their future college, team, or program.

Note: This code does not need to explicitly contain the term “WVU.” If through context it is clear that the student-athlete is talking about a team or program at WVU (e.g., my/this/the team or program) or WVU as a university (e.g., here, this school, this is where) then this code still applies.

Additionally, merely because the word WVU is used in the response does not mean that this code fits. Remember this code is specifically about interest or excitement in attending WVU.

2. **Inspired continued sport participation** – The message made the student-athlete consider if they want to continue to play their sport in general or in college, but **does not** refer to WVU.

- Made the student-athlete want to keep playing sport.
- Made the student-athlete see value in participating in college sport.

3. **Reinforced the value of education** – The message made the student-athlete focus on or recognize the importance of education.

- Made the student-athlete take school seriously.
- Made the student-athlete spend time on school.

4. **Prioritized others first** – The message made the student-athlete think of or focus on meeting/fulfilling others’ needs, interests, or expectations.

- Made the student-athlete put their team first.
- Made the student-athlete try to be a good role model for others.
- Made the student-athlete try to meet others’ expectations.

5. **Formed expectations and helped prepare** – The message set the general (i.e., non-specific) expectations of and/or preparation for the upcoming transition into college sport.

- Made the student-athlete begin preparing for changes or challenges that they expect to face in college sport or at WVU.

- Let the student-athlete know what to expect.
6. **Anticipated the formation of relationships** - The message made the student-athlete expect to form future relationships with teammates, coaches, or peers.
- Made the student-athlete expect to be part of a family.
 - Made the student-athlete feel closer to people prior to their entry.
7. **Aided in personal growth** – The message aided in the development of the student-athlete in a general sense as a person, or beyond or in addition their sporting life.
- Made or shaped the student-athlete as a person.
 - Helped the student-athlete plan or focus on their life beyond sport.

Note. This code only applies if part of the influence that the athlete describes extends beyond sport. This means effects that are completely contextualized within sport cannot fit this code.

8. **Developed work ethic** – The message made the student-athlete assign value to hard work and/or putting forth a maximum effort. Student-athletes' value of hard work or effort is sometimes framed as the means of their future or previous improvement or success.
- Made the student-athlete try hard, give it their all, or put forth maximum effort.
 - Made the student-athlete see hard work as a means of success or improvement.

Note. References to hard work would seemingly fit into this code, but examine what the student-athlete worked hard to do before coding. This code is about valuing hard work; expecting to work hard is different, as is working hard to attend WVU is different.

9. **Instilled a positive mindset** – The message made the student-athlete have a general positive attitude/mindset regarding playing sport or being a part of their team.
- Kept the student-athlete positive about the transition to college sport or sport in general.
 - Served as a source of the students-athlete's confidence, focus, or mental toughness in their own abilities.
 - Stressed the importance of enjoying or appreciating their sport or time as a student-athlete.
10. **Had little to no effect prior to entry** - Student-athletes explicitly says that the message had little to no effect before they joined their team.
- The effect of the message was nonexistent or very limited.
 - The message did not have an effect or was not even understood until after they joined their teams.

What, if any, influence do the memorable messages that are received by Division I athletes during their anticipatory socialization stage have on them during their assimilation stage?

1. **Caused relational strain** –The message strained relationships or makes the student-athlete doubt the quality of their relationships with teammates.
 - Fosters distrust, feelings of being lied to.
 - Causes disagreements or misunderstandings or resentment towards others.
2. **Developed relationships through similarity** –The message helped promote relationships between student-athletes because of they share similarities.
 - Brings athletes together because of similar attitudes, experiences, or interests.
 - Increases cohesion because similar experiences.
3. **Fostered relational closeness** – The message enabled the student-athlete to attribute general aspects of relational quality to their relationships – mutual trust, relational closeness, respect, affect – with teammates or coaches.
 - Inspires feelings like trust, connection, closeness, or relational satisfaction.
4. **Provided general understanding of task/role** – The message informs student-athletes of their tasks and roles within their context of sport or their specific team.
 - Sets goals or definitions of what it means to be successful.
 - Gives understanding of task/role in a general sense without specific detail.
 - Reinforces role through recognition of official hierarchy.
5. **Encouraged taking a leadership role** – The student-athlete uses the message as a means or rationale to lead, influence, guide, or instruct their teammates or take on a general leadership role.
 - Makes the student-athlete see themselves as leaders.
 - Inspires the student-athlete to give instruction or direction to their teammates.
 - Makes the student-athlete pass the message on to their teammates.
6. **Promoted being a good teammate** – The message made the student-athlete desire/attempt to be a “good teammate” or put their team first.
 - Rationale to serve the team in a needed capacity.
 - Made the student-athlete attempt to live up to the ideal of a good teammate.
 - Made the student-athlete place the team above themselves.

7. **Guided time spent on tasks**– The message assists in how student-athlete spends their time.

- Shapes how the student-athlete use their time management.
- Dictates the time or effort that student-athletes put into to school.

8. **Aided in personal growth** – The message makes the student-athlete feel like or focus on becoming a better person beyond playing sport, off the field, or into the distant future.

- Aids the student-athlete to become a better person or more mature.
- Makes the student-athlete want to develop social networks outside of sport.

Note. The effect attributed to this message needs to be about more than sport.

9. **Instilled positive mindset** – The message helps the student-athlete have or maintain a positive attitude (e.g., up beat, confident, open to instruction) or appreciation, pride, or affect for their teammates, team, sport, or WVU.

- Keeps the student-athlete positive, confident, or instills pride in a team.
- Makes the student-athlete appreciate their experiences, memories, or opportunity to play sport in college.

10. **Inspired continued hard work** - The message makes student-athletes value and/or want to continue to work hard or put forth effort in sport, or causes them to want to have success, perform well, or improve their performance as an individual or a team in sport.

- Makes the student-athlete want to help their program or team succeed or to improve their performance or skills.
- Makes the student-athlete value or motivated to put forth hard work/effort.

Note: This code is specific to student-athletes' effort within a sport context. Just because a response has the word motivation in it, does not mean the effect attributed to the message should be coded as continued motivation. If the word motivation is in the response, please make sure you code what the student-athlete is being motivated to do before selecting a code.

11. **Provided comfort** –The message is a source of comfort for student-athletes in general regarding being a student-athlete at WVU or stressful times.

- Reduces stress of sport/college.
- Helps the student-athlete get past poor performance or to persevere.

12. **Had Little to No effect** – The student-athlete explicitly states that the message had no or little effect.

Appendix F

Member Checking Invitation

[NAME OF THE STUDENT-ATHLETE]

I hope your summer is going well. I am finishing up my dissertation, and the last thing I need to do before I can graduate is to have student-athletes read a summary of my findings and validate those findings. If you could spare 5-10 minutes to read this summary and to answer the below question I would greatly appreciate it.

Overall, do you find that my results make sense, seem accurate, and are possible, based on your experiences as a Division I student-athlete here at WVU? If not, please identify which part of the results does not make sense, is not accurate, or does not seem possible and why.

You should send your response to this email address (Gcranmer@mix.wvu.edu).

Best,

-Gregory A. Cranmer

Appendix G

Summary of the Results

Introduction: Below are four very brief summaries of student-athletes' accounts of memorable messages that they received before they came to college.

1. Division I student-athletes at WVU recall receiving memorable messages about 10 topics:

- The desirable attitudes they should have when playing sport (e.g., confidence, focus).
- The importance of hard work in sport.
- Their physical skills or abilities.
- The opportunities or benefits (e.g., jobs, memories, experiences) of playing sport.
- The possibility of making friends with teammates, joining the WVU family, or gaining a new home at WVU.
- Student-athletes being viewed as role models or as representatives of WVU by others.
- How quickly college athletics go by.
- The importance of education and doing well in classes.
- Having pride in being a student-athlete at WVU.
- The challenges that come with playing sport in college (e.g., sacrifices, difficulties).

2. Division I student-athletes at WVU received memorable messages from sources (coaches, fathers, teammates, etc.) for 14 reasons:

- To recruit the student-athlete to commit to WVU or join their team.
- To encourage the student-athlete to keep playing sport in college.
- To respond to a difficulty the student-athlete was experiencing.
- To recognize the student-athlete was doing the right things or was talented.
- To share a personal experience with the athlete.
- To express concern, support, or care for the student-athlete.
- To welcome the student-athlete to WVU.
- To prepare the student-athlete for a future role on their team.
- To prepare the student-athlete for the academic demands of college.
- To encourage the student-athlete to work hard.
- To make the student-athlete appreciate the chance to play college sport.
- To make the student-athlete mentally tough.
- To aid in the student-athlete's personal development outside of sport.
- Because of a role (e.g., they were a coach) or timing (e.g., the athlete was in high school).

3. Before Division I student-athletes at WVU came to college, they attribute 10 functions to the memorable messages they received.

- The student-athlete had increased interest in attending WVU.
- The student-athlete was inspired to continue to play sport in college.
- The student-athlete saw the value of education.
- The student-athlete wanted to be a good teammate or meet other's expectations.
- The student-athlete formed expectations and prepared to join their teams.
- The student-athlete anticipated making friends on their new teams.
- The student-athlete felt like they became a better person outside of sport.
- The student-athlete worked hard.
- The student-athlete kept a positive mindset or attitude.
- The message had no effect before the student-athlete joined their team.

4. After the Division I student-athletes at WVU came to college, they attribute 12 functions to the memorable messages they received.

- The student-athletes' relationships with coaches or teammates suffered.
- The student-athlete developed relationships with teammates because they were similar.
- The student-athlete felt closer to their coaches and teammates.
- The student-athlete understood their tasks and roles on their teams.
- The student-athlete took a leadership role on their team.
- The student-athlete tried to be a good teammate.
- The student-athlete used the message to determine how to spend their time.
- The student-athlete felt like they became a better person outside of sport.
- The student-athlete kept a positive mindset or attitude.
- The student-athlete worked hard.
- The student-athlete was comforted by the message during stressful time.
- The message had no effect after the student-athlete joined their team.